INSIDE: CONTESTS... CONTESTS... CONTESTS

PARSEC

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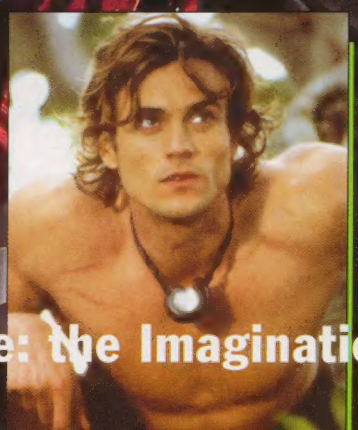
LEXA DOIG
LAURA BERTRAM
AND
GORDON
MICHAEL WOLVETT

Plus
Top Klingon
J.G. Hertzler
and chewing the
scenery on Lexx

BEASTMASTER'S
DANIEL GODDARD



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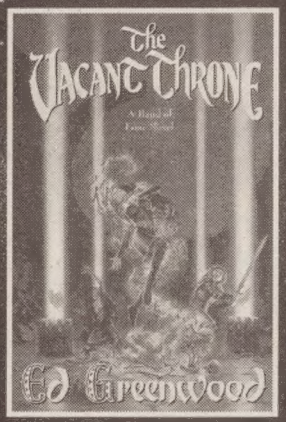

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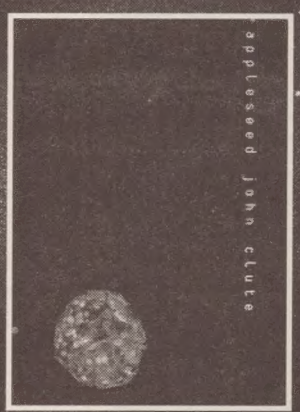

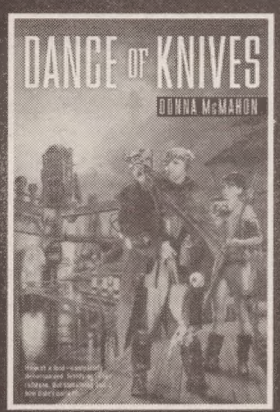

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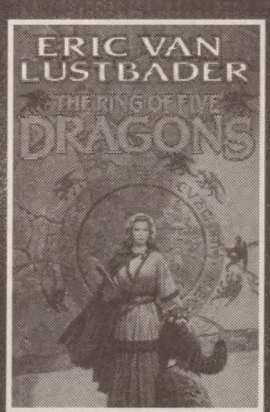

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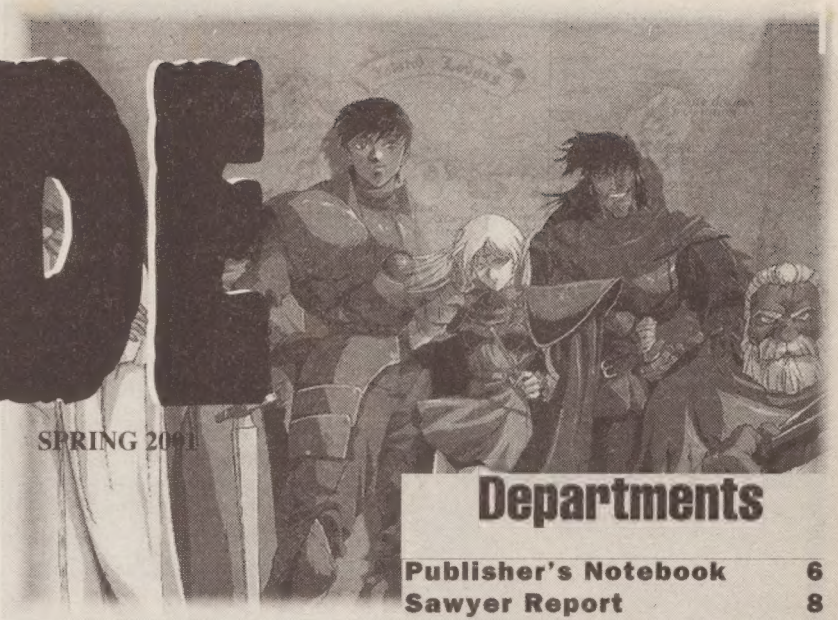

PARSEC VOLUME 4 NUMBER 3 SPRING 2001

"The best sound a crowd can ever make is complete and utter silence, that's when they're in the edge of the moment and that's the most phenomenal thing."

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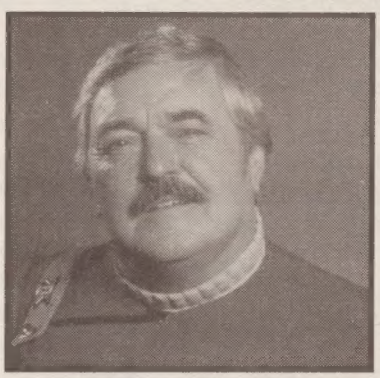

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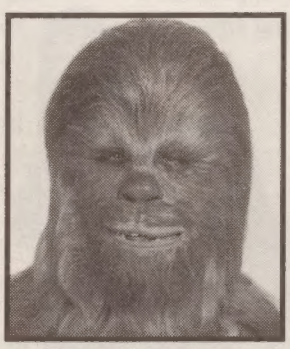

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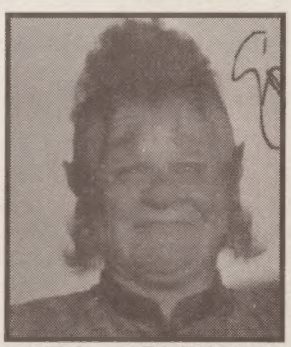

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Chris Krejlgaard
Publisher/Managing Editor

Donna Krejlgaard
Advertising Co-ordinator

REGULAR CONTRIBUTORS

A. Jaye Williams
Central Canada Correspondent
Gregg Chamberlain
West Coast Correspondent

Sandy Carruthers, Connor, Kevin Davies, Larry DeSouza, Joanne Mutch, Janet L. Hetherington, Lars Johanson, Derwin Mak, Jon Maynall, Jean-Pierre Normand, Miki Okamoto, Terry Pallot, John Platt, Dale Sproule, Ronn Sutton, Emru Townsend, Stefan Vallent,

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Why Chris? ... Why?

By the time this is read, it will likely be too late.

The Lone Gunmen will be gone.

I may be wrong on this point — since the suits at Fox have yet to announce on next season's slate of shows as I'm writing this. But I'm guessing the series will be a memory.

Too bad.

The Lone Gunmen offered characters who were well-drawn (and acted), as well as stories which were interesting ... to say the least.

More often than not, the series effectively managed to combine humour, drama and science fiction. It's not an easy task ... too often, the humour quotient slides too far toward ridicule.

(The tango contest with El Lobo, is a textbook example of how the three elements can be pulled together by a deft master like Chris Carter).

Indeed, the dearth of science fiction programs that can accomplish such tasks makes the presence of the Lone Gunmen on television so gratifying. It manages to have fun with the genre, without stooping to condescension or outright mockery.

Of course, patience is a virtue and virtue and Hollywood have never been synonymous.

The main problem is that Fox has become just another network.

When it began in the mid-'80s, Fox was bold, unique and had the cojones to put some daring programs on the air — and keep them there until the audience found them.

Now, it seems, instant gratification is the order of the day. If the audience isn't there, by week three ... you're on life support. By week five? It's time to start sending out your resume. Week seven? Well, you get the gist of where this is going. X-Files was given the time to find its audience and its legs as a series. Harsh Realms? Nah.

Lone Gunmen got a better chance than Carter's sophomore effort, but I don't think it will get too much more.

As I write this, the series is mired somewhere in the nether regions of the Neilsens. Hell, that's par for the course for most science fiction and fantasy programs ... quick, someone look what the best rating Voyager got — even with Seven of Nine.

If the suits surprise me and renew the series, then I must congratulate them for showing some of that patience I said was lacking in the world of the networks.

If it is gone, then it is the fans' loss.

Why Carter keeps butting his head against the network wall is beyond me.

If anything, he deserves an award for perseverance.

He certainly deserves better from a network that — through the X-Files — he helped keep on the radar during those lean days in the '90s.

'Til next time.

Chris

Email your letters to:
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The future has never been a darker, more challenging place than in the newest sensational novel from Tesseract Books!

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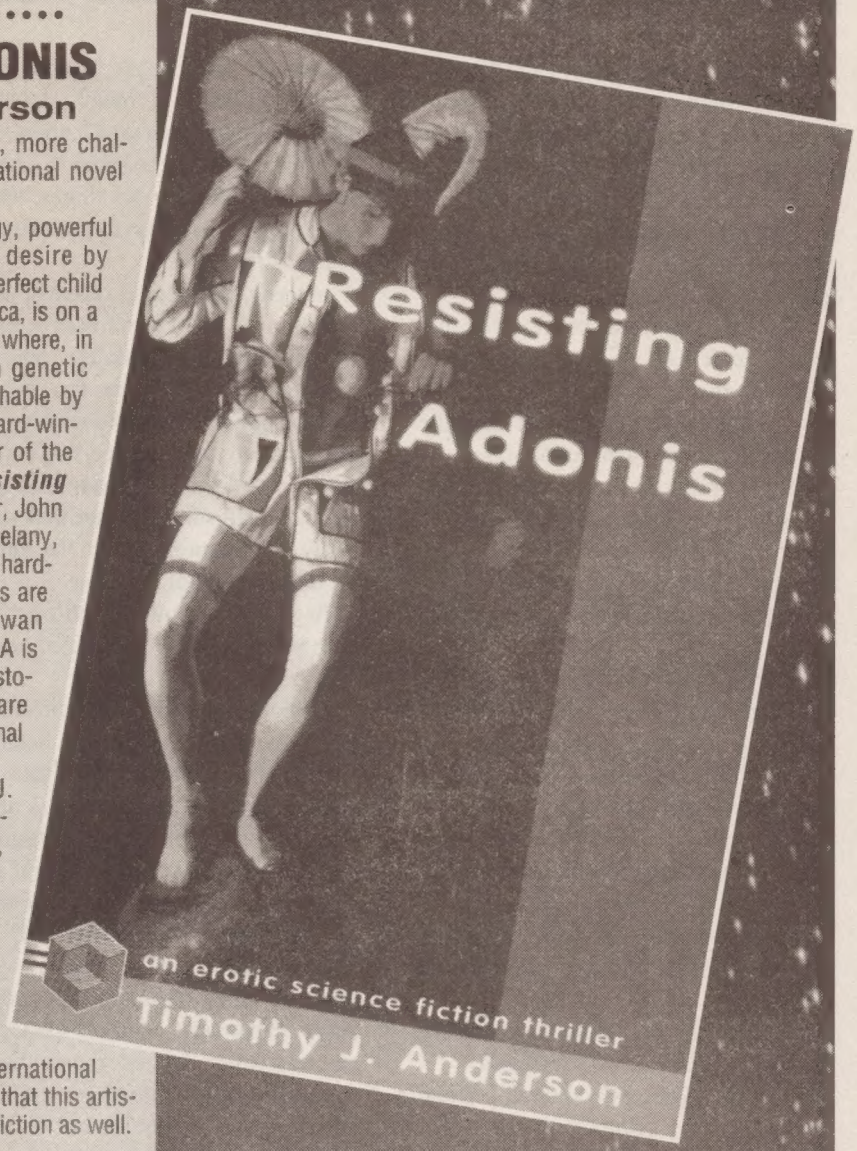


Filmifying sci-fi good novels rare events

It happens all the time: I meet someone, they inquire about what I do for a living, I tell them I write science-fiction novels, and they ask whether any of them have been made into movies.

Two misconceptions underlie that question, one naive and the other galling.

The naive misconception is that most novels, or at least a goodly fraction of them, get made into films.

The truth is that hardly any actually do. Indeed, even most major novels don't get produced for the silver screen. Consider the winners of the Science Fiction and Fantasy Writers of America's Nebula Award, the "Academy Award" of the science-fiction field.

Thirty-six novels have received that trophy (including my own The Terminal Experiment, which won the 1995 award). Of those 36, how many do you think have been flickified?

Only two — and, as it happens, the first two: Frank Herbert's Dune (which won the 1965 Nebula), and Daniel Keyes's Flowers for Algernon (which won the 1966 award, and was filmed as Charly).

All the others — including such classics as Isaac Asimov's The Gods Themselves, Orson Scott Card's Ender's Game, Arthur C. Clarke's Rendezvous with Rama, William Gibson's Neuromancer, Ursula K. Le Guin's The Left Hand of Darkness, Joe Haldeman's The Forever War, Larry Niven's Ringworld and Kim Stanley Robinson's Red Mars — remain unfilmed.

And if books of that stature don't get made into movies, consider just how unlikely it is that an average novel by a midlist writer is ever going to be filmed.

In fact, only a handful of SF novels have ever been made into movies, and in many cases the resulting products were atrocious.

David Brin's The Postman and Robert A. Heinlein's The Puppet Masters are great books, but the film adaptations stank. (Probably the best film ever made from an SF novel was 1968's very liberal adaptation of Pierre Boulle's La Planäte des singes, which came out 33 years ago as the original Planet of the Apes.)

Indeed, I had dinner recently with friends, and, as it often does for us newly middle-aged folk, the topic of eventual retirement came up. One of my buddies opined that I had nothing to worry about: all I needed was for a couple of my books to be made into movies, and I'd be all set. I told her that was precisely like planning to win the lottery — the odds are about the same.

In fact, most authors don't get rich even when a movie is made of one of their books.

Option fees (the amount producers pay to have you agree not to license the movie rights to anyone else) start at about $5,000 USfor a year — a nice windfall, sure, but not life-changing. And an author's compensation if a movie is made from his or her book is typically between $150,000 and $300,000 US — all of which comes as a lump payment, letting the tax people carve 50 per cent right off the top. Now, yes, even after the government has siphoned off its share, that's certainly a pile of money — but it's only a 10th of what the average person needs in order to retire with a middle-class income.

Now, what about the galling misconception?

It's the belief that a book is a second-rate form of expression. Unless the story is committed to film, we're led to believe that the book is a failure.

Poppycock. Despite the pernicious auteur school of filmmaking (which promulgates the lie that the director is the sole creator of the film), movies are enormously collaborative, and therefore are exercises in compromise. A novel, on the other hand, is one person's pure, unadulterated vision: it's exactly what the artist intended, without concession or budgetary constraints.

(This isn't sour grapes, by the way; my novels Golden Fleece, The Terminal Experiment and Illegal Alien have all been optioned, and, at this writing, it looks like Illegal Alien might indeed actually get filmed next year; an excellent screenplay adaptation of it has been written by Michael Lennick, and David Coatsworth, executive producer of Arnold Schwarzenegger's The Sixth Day, is slated to produce.)

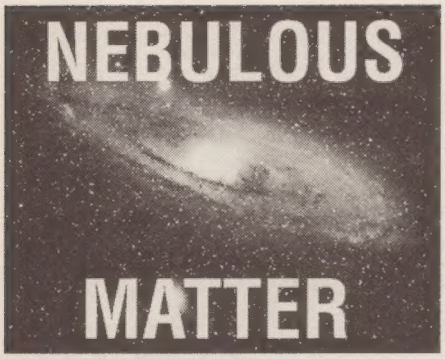
People do understand this as related to other kinds of art. No one said to Michelangelo after he finished sculpting David that, well, gee, it's a nice enough statue, but, you know, unless they make an action figure out of it, what good is it?

And yet the same principle should obviously apply to books versus movies: the definitive version of Dune is Frank Herbert's novel, not the theatrical film or the recent Space/Sci-Fi Channel miniseries. And my all-time favourite SF novel, Frederik Pohl's Gateway, won't become one whit better than it already is if someone someday makes a movie out of it. Books are an end unto themselves, not proposals aimed at Hollywood; whether the book is a success or failure has nothing to do with whether Tinsel Town takes an interest.

So next time you're chatting with an author, don't ask if there have been any movies made from his or her books. Instead, ask where you can buy a copy of the actual, complete, finished work of art: the original dreamer's word on the printed page.

After all, as everybody knows, the book is always better than the movie.

Robert J. Sawyer — "the dean of Canadian science fiction," according to The Ottawa Citizen — is the author of 12 novels, including Starplex, Frameshift, Factoring Humanity, Illegal Alien, and Calculating God. Visit his web site at www.sfwriter.com



King of Dragon Pass takes three awards

King of Dragon Pass won three Best of Glorantha awards: Best Visual Art, Best Playing Aid and Best of the Best. The annual awards are sponsored by Issaries, Inc., creator of the mythic fantasy world of Glorantha, and voted on by fans of the setting.

"Glorantha fans can be a pretty demanding audience, so we're really pleased that they chose us," said David Dunham, the game's producer.

King of Dragon Pass runs on both Windows and Macintosh, and is available for $29.95 US from A Sharp's website **www.a-sharp.com**, or select retailers.

Something for a Witchblade fan

Moore Custom Creations has unveiled something that any true fan of Top Cow' Sara Pezzini would clamour to have in his or her room ... a four-foot tall statue of Pezzini clothed in the Witchblade.

The statue, which carries a $999 US pricetag, is hand-cast fibreglass resin.

With this statue, Moore Custom Creations show that bigger is better.

The statue is scheduled to be available in August.

GOT NEWS?
send it to
editorial@parsec.on.ca

Atlanticon 2001 cancelled

The organizing committee for Atlanticon 2001 has announced that the event has been cancelled due due to a lack of sponsorship support by local business and government.

Drive on to help keep First Wave on air

The fourth season is still up in the air, if you want to get more First Wave help now!

That is the message that has been making the rounds on the Internet.

According to the message that has cropped up on bulletin boards, the producers of the program have decided to pull the plug on the Vancouver-based show. Fans are being asked to voice their support either at:

www.bertelsmann.com/contact/contact.cfm

or by sending a note to:

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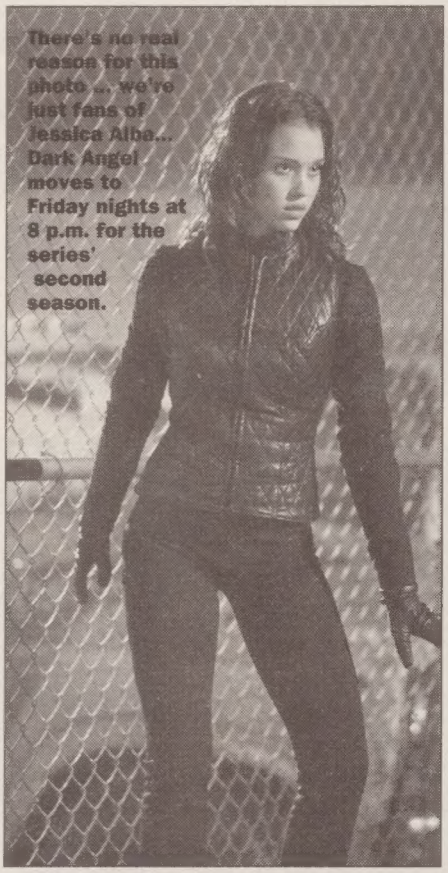
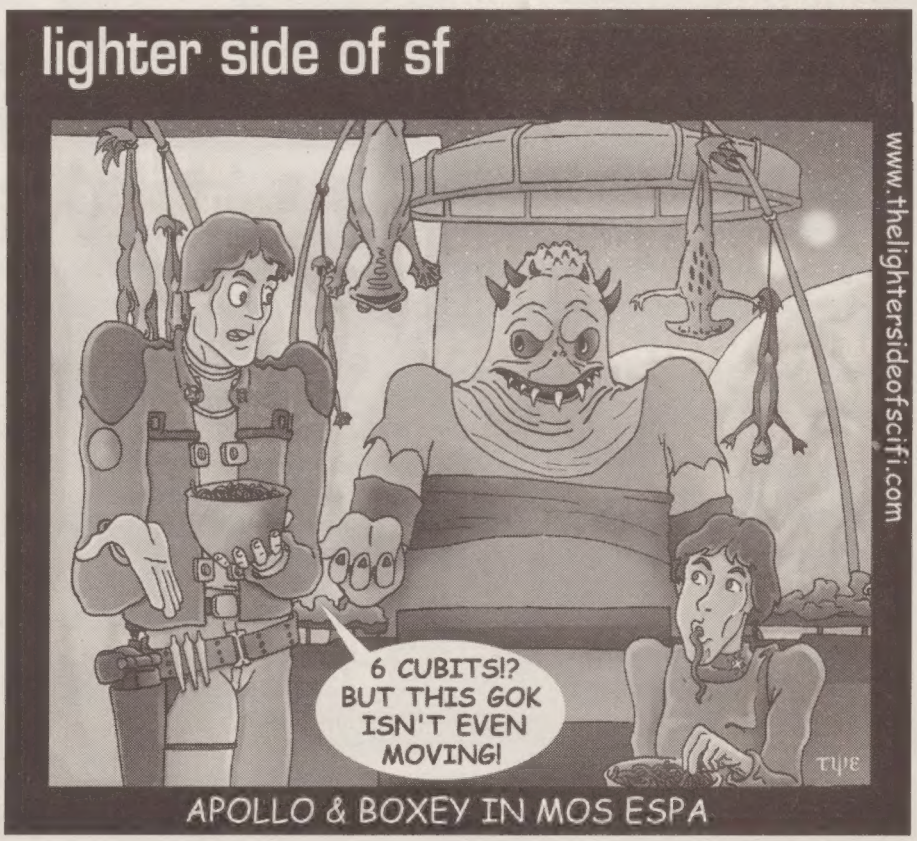


There's no real reason for this photo ... we're just fans of Jessica Alba... Dark Angel moves to Friday nights at 8 p.m. for the series' second season.

lighter side of sf



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Back into the stars

Andromeda's 'living cartoon' thrives on running on familar ground

Say the name "Gene Roddenberry" and you think of starships, grand adventures and moral dilemmas among the stars.

When Andromeda premiered last fall, it became the second series on the air to carry this name as a precedent to its title.

For some actors on the series, the name was a drawing card — a chance to be part of the legacy.

But for all associated with Andromeda, Roddenberry's name carries a weight and responsibility that they each feel and respect.

Gordon Michael Wolvett relishes his role as Seamus Harper on Andromeda for more reasons than just being "a big Roddenberry fan." The role also gives him a chance to tread on familiar ground — and expand on the territory while he's there.

"It was kind of like a character that I already do, so I didn't have to come up with anything and I enjoy doing these characters," Wolvett said of Harper.

Like his character, Wolvett is not a stoic person and takes the success of the series and of his place in it in stride.

"This is the fifth series in which I'm one of the leads, it's just the first one anyone has heard of," Wolvett cracks. "But that's one of the joys of working in Canada, you can cut your teeth and get a lot of experience failing ... just by not creating enough of an audience to keep going.

"In the States, when a lot more money is poured into a show and a lot more publicity is done for a show, a lot more people see it fail ... like The Michael Richards Show."

On Andromeda, Wolvett's character serves as the ship's handyman and comedic element or, as he puts it, "Bugs Bunny meets Han Solo.

"He's not a fine, upstanding citizen, he's like a living cartoon. He doesn't take anything seriously, he's pretty wily and a smart-ass.

"But he can be pretty brilliant when he whips out the Acme directions and puts stuff together ... Ok, maybe he's more like Wile Coyote."

On Andromeda, Gordon Michael Wolvett plays the irreverent — OK, the smart ass — Seamus Harper. It's a character which taps into familar ground and expand his range a bit.

By
Chris Krejlgaard

And that was the kind of actor-slash-character that producers had in mind when they cast the role.

"We needed somebody who represented the younger audience for us. Somebody who could represent the audience's experience," explained executive producer Allan Eastman. "We needed somebody who would react to situations with attitude and humour and be a counterweight to the intensness and seriousness of Tyr or the military bearing of our hero."

Ad-libbing that Tyr was smelly along with some smart-ass comments nailed the audition for Wolvett

"One of the things that attracted me to the character," Wolvett recalls. "Was that I could see on the page that this was a part that would meld really well with ad libbing.

Rather than work entirely from a script during the audition, Wolvett ad libbed. It was a strategy that worked .During the casting session, Wolvett did read the dialogue presented to him ... he just added to it and threw some of his own gestures and smart-ass comments into the mix.

"I sort of re-interpreted some of the insults that they included in the script," Wolvett said, adding that one of the insults was a lengthy shot at Keith Hamilton Cobb's character of Tyr Anasazi.

"For the record, he's not really smelly," Wolvett said of the multi-adjective description of the character.

As part of the audition, Wolvett had to handle a two-page speech which compared life to a bug hitting a windshield interspersed with techno-babble.

"I don't have too much trouble with the techno-babble, I enjoy it. "I'm like a kid on a space ship."

The ad lib caught the fancy of the official from Tribune Entertainment (the distributor of the series) and the person who was handling the auditions during the latter stages of the process - Wolvett describes him as a kindred spirit.

"I missed out on the first round because we were driving up the coast and we weren't in Los Angeles and we didn't want to return to Canada because we'd just moved to California," Wolvett explains. "But later on I was available and decided to audition."

Coming to the series late in the pre-production process meant that he had two weeks to uproot him and his wife in Los Angeles and move to Vancouver.

"In retrospect, I'm really happy and I'm really excited about it.

"Whenever you do these things, you step into a sea of hundred people involved in the project and you never know what you're going to get," he said. "I think I've been really lucky we ended up with in the production and creative aspects."

Wolvett points out that the professionalism of the cast and the crew and the relaxed attitude on the set made his hasty entrance onto the series easy.

With Seamus's fun, sarcastic side comes something darker

Once in Vancouver, Wolvett got caught in the whirlwind of meeting the producers, writers and some of the people, such as Majel Roddenberry and John de Lancie, whom he admired on Star Trek.

"I was a big Star Trek fan and a huge Star Trek: the Next Generation fan," he said, explaining that the attraction of the show was from a television standpoint rather than from a Trekkers' perspective. "I like it mainly because of the acting, but also I loved the fact that every episode could feasibly happen within the framework that Roddenberry created and the place of humans in such a politically charged atmosphere."

"That's what's neat about Andromeda, it's sort of the antithesis of Star Trek."

Being such a fan of Star Trek made joining the cast of a production carrying the Gene Roddenberry moniker a head experience for the actor.

With the character of Harper, Wolvett walks a fine line between becoming just comedy relief and serving as a comedic character.

"I try to have fun with what I'm doing, but I don't go for the laugh from the audience, I go for the laugh of my fellow actors," he explained. "It's not me Gord trying to come up with a funny way to do the scene. It's Harper messing around and joking with his friends.

"When a character so neatly and immediately etches

"I try to have fun with what I'm doing, but I don't go for the laugh from the audience, I go for the laugh of my fellow actors."

itself out as a certain kind of thing, you want to play against that and start bringing out characteristics that are completely surprising that you don't expect."

For a character like Seamus Harper, this means plumbing the character's darker side or a sadder side or a dangerous aspect. Wolvett points out the series' head writer Robert Wolfe Hewitt is steering toward the latter.

"I think he wants to say 'Because this character has such a dark past which fuels his sarcastic, smirky nature, there's also a side to him that could ignite into a very large fire and explode at any time."

Darkness

Exploring such darker natures is easier on Andromeda than on Wolvett's favourite show (and Hewitt's former employer) Star Trek. There, Wolvett explains, the characters are bound by a code of honour to uphold the virtues of Starfleet. There's no such restrictions on the Andromeda crew.

"I think Robert wants to feel like nobody on board this ship is ever 100-per-cent safe and, if push comes to shove, someone will have to give."

But after almost 20 years in the business, Wolvett wants the challenge that comes with pushing the dark side of his character.

"I just wanted to perform when I was young," he says of his time in dance and pantomime classes when he was a child. "Originally, I just wanted to make people smile," he said. "The best sound a crowd can ever make is complete and utter silence, that's when they're in the edge of the moment and that's the most phenomenal thing," Wolvett explained. "That's all I wanted.

"Now, I wonder what I'm contributing. I haven't done it yet whatever it is that I can say 'Yeah, that's my contribution to humanity."

Wolvett started attending acting classes when he was 8 and continued on for the next eight years. Wolvett's first movie role was with James Woods and Alan Arkin in Joshua Then and Now.

"I saw two stars being so far off the page and continuing on and on until the director called 'cut' and they had everyone in stitches," he recalls. "And I though, 'Oh, so you don't have to follow the script.' I think that was the beginning of the end."

While the experience enamoured Wolvett to the craft, working as a professional actor didn't gain him any favour among the acting schools instructors since the roles took him away from school productions.

"I would get into more trouble with my teachers in acting school for going and doing a television series than I would from my public school teachers," he explained.

On the big screen Wolvett has tackled parts in the Bride of Chucky and the upcoming Clutch, while his television credits include Mysterious Island, Mission Genesis (Deep water Black in Canada), Wildside, PSI Factor, FX: The Series, Sliders and Kung Fu: The Legend Continues.

"I don't know if I'm supposed to be some sort of archetype that's supposed to be in a sci-fi show. But it just seems to be that way," Wolvett said. "I love sci-fi."

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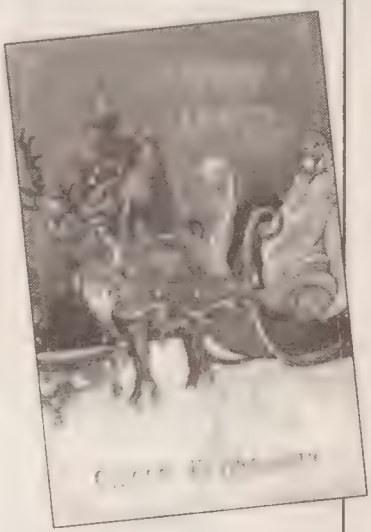

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A different kind of Valentine

In her previous brush with the Roddenberry Legacy, Lisa Ryder was blown to bits it the first episode. Now, with Andromeda the actress relishes her new role... ACTION HERO

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With Beka Valentine, Lisa Ryder presses on into new territory

Lisa Ryder stars as Beka Valentine, the commander of the salvage ship Eureka Maru and eventual first officer of the Andromeda Ascendant.

It is a demanding role - both because of the story line and because of the stature of the series' lead. Valentine is expected to be the counter-point to Kevin Sorbo's Dylan Hunt.

"Kevin is a very strong-mined person, very opinionated ... in a good way, and he has a natural leader quality," Ryder said. "That kind of stuff sure does push you in terms of having to stand up to that and having to be the second in authority next to that.

"You have to be strong, you cannot back down from the guy as a character You have to push the strong."

Valentine is intended to serve as a bookend to Sorbo — a female counterpart who is expected to have the same strength and integrity as Hunt.

For the producers, Ryder was just what they were looking for when they were casting for the captain of the Eureka Maru.

"We needed a smart tough, sassy lady to be Beka." Executive producer Allan Eastman explained. "And that was Lisa."

Of course, Ryder wasn't the only one they considered for the part.

During the casting process, Lexa Doig also auditioned for the role of Valentine - a part Doig said she lacked the physical presence to carry.

"I read the description and thought, 'Yeah, right.' And the idea of a leading actress being eye-to-belt-buckle with the leading man, didn't make much sense to me," Doig recalls.

Such strong characters are becoming Ryder's stock in trade.

"I'm very attracted to the idea of playing a strong woman, .. strong mentally, strong emotionally ... a survivor-type person," Ryder explained. "That has been a theme in my work for the last little while.

"Maybe it's my height, maybe it's the fact that I work out, but I'm getting

Andromeda isn't the first series bearing Gene Roddenberry's moniker that Lisa Ryder has been part of. Earth: Final Conflict fans will remember her as Boone's wife in that series' premiere episode.

Lisa Ryder has shown that her versatile talents extend beyond the acting arena into writing. She has written and co-written a number of stage plays including Baggage, Panting of the Victors and a one-woman show entitled, Put Me Away.

cast a lot in these action roles."

During the course of the first season, Valentine becomes a tougher and more physical character — something which doesn't phase Ryder.

The physicality of the role of Beka doesn't phase Ryder. The veteran of more than 25 stage plays including productions of Insignificance, Possible Worlds and Macbeth, is also devoted to her workout regime. As well, her training as a dancer (a talent she has kept honed in a number of her stage performances) has helped her performance in action-adventure productions.

"It's always tiring when you have a big fight scene, but I find that stuff energizing," she said. "I am really interested in this as an actor, I'm not into the talking heads kind of role. I like the energy."

Valentine also develops a better sense of humour — something which Ryder has wanted for the character since she took on the role.

When season two commences, Ryder says audiences will see the evolution of the character continuing.

In the first season, Ryder explains, Valentine was defined a great deal by the men around her ... her brother, father, Dylan and Tyr especially. Next season, expect Valentine to strike out a bit more on her own and become defined by "her own actions and her own decisions."

This means, the actress hopes, that the men in Valentine's past take on a subordinate role.

"There won't be stories from her past about her brother or her father, there'll be stories about Beka.

."From the hints that Robert (Hewitt Wolfe, the series' head writer) has given me and the things that we've talked about together, I think that she's going to continue to grow and I'm really happy with the communication that goes on between the producers and the actors."

As a result of this level of communication, actors are able to put a firmer stamp on their characters and a firm foundation for the necessary collaboration that is in place to push the characters forward.

"Robert Wolfe and Allan had an idea of the way they wanted things and then there's other producers who wanted whole different things and then there's the reality of the actors who show up and interpret those suggestions," Ryder explained. " So, you have to reconcile all of those elements and then it becomes a feedback loop."

This loop, allows actors, writers and producers to share information and insight so that the three parties can fine tune a particular character so that "it becomes a living character rather than a written character."

During the first season, Ryder also had to become accustomed to working with the other actors (as they to her). This learning curve also made playing Valentine a little tougher since the characters were supposed to have a history together — a history, the actors lacked.

"I am really interested in this as an actor, I'm not into the talking heads kind of role. I like the energy."

— Ryder
on her emergence into a new genre

"The fact that I'm supposed to have this crew and have been with this crew for years and years is hard to play for the first couple of episodes, because you don't really know the people," she explains. "It's written on the page, but there's no sense of history between you and you have to invent it."

But after spending every day together over the course of several months, the sense of camaraderie needed had been forged and the under currents that are woven into the plot become easier to play.

There is a sense of excitement in Ryder's voice when she discusses Andromed and her recent gigs. In the past, she had gained some notoriety playing the office bimbo in the Canadian television series, The Newsroom.

"I have been cast as a ditsy blonde, which I find a tremendous amount of fun," she said. "But it's interesting to have that range.

"If you're in your early 20s, there's no end to the ditzy blondes to play. But as you get older, you want some variety, you want to grow, you don't want to be typecast."

During her career, Ryder has swung between the two

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extremes — the ditz and the strong woman in all mediums she has tackled.

"It's just a different medium, and that's where the departure is," she explains. "Theatre is just as exhausting, because you spend your day gearing up for the performance, you're eating right for the performance and you're working out for the performance and you're keeping your energy for that performance and the amount of effort you put out in that two hours you're on stage.

"Whereas on TV, it's more sprint-stop-sprint-stop. You have to conserve your energy in a different way."

But television, Ryder says, is demanding in other ways.

The rehearsal time is minimal and the number of takes that actors usually can have for a particular scene is three

"If you're in your early 20s, there's no end to the ditzy blondes to play. But as you get older, you want some variety, you want to grow, you don't want to be typecast," says Lisa Ryder of her past work on The Newsroom and her efforts to tackle new roles.

.. tops . In theatre, there's three to six weeks of rehearsals and there's more forgiveness for flubs.

"After all the rehearsals, you either have it down or if you don't, you at least have the freedom to improve — which you can't do on TV."

Of course, Andromeda isn't the first science fiction project Ryder has been part of.

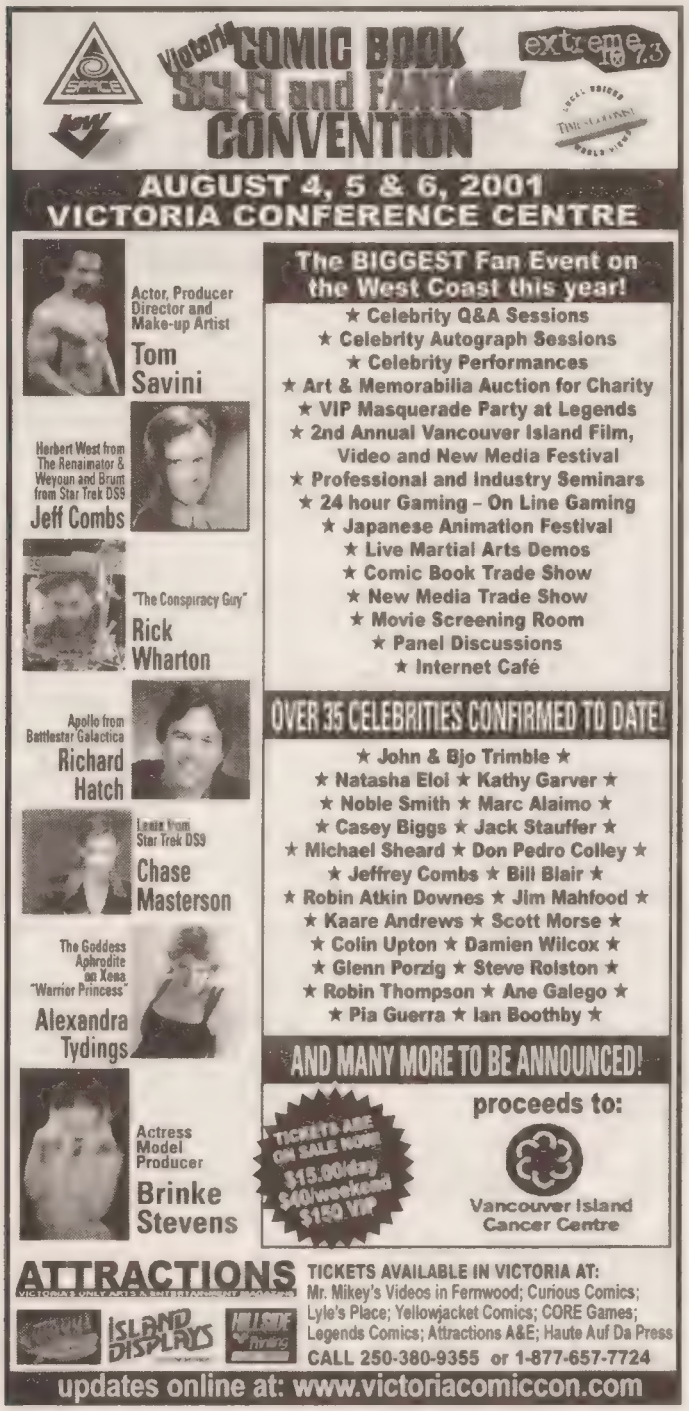
Before joining the cast of Andromeda, Ryder racked up a sizeable television resume with roles on Total Recall 2070, Psi Factor and Forever Knight.

And Andromeda is not the first with Gene Roddenberry's name preceding the title to which she has accepted a role.

The first was Final Conflict. There she was the victim of a bomb in the first episode ... a bomb which cost William Boone his beloved and Ryder a recurring part on the series. But even with the legendary name atop the credits, there are some distinct differences between the two projects.

"I guess this is a Gene Roddenberry production," Ryder starts. "But I know that from the germ of his idea, so much work has gone into it and so many other producers' ideas and so much of the writers' work has gone in that really it isn't a Gene Roddenberry production.

"It's pretty cool to be part of that legacy, but I think everyone knows it has taken off past that point."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Andromeda's youngest cast member happens to be one with largest resume

Better-known for her dramatic work, the character of Trance Gemini was just too good an opportunity for Laura Beltram to pass up

By all accounts Laura Bertram is the most accomplished and most admired actor on the set of Andromeda.

"In a lot of ways, Laura is our strongest actor even though she is very young. She's just 21 or 22, but she has incredible movie star quality. She has a rare quality and it's magic when you see it as a director," said executive producer Allan Eastman.

"She's an individual who, when you see her at rehearsal and even during a shot, you go, 'OK, that's fine.' Then when you see it on film, you go, 'wow, that's amazing.'

"She just has an ability to project herself on film and become more on film than what you see in real-life ... that magic transference through the lens."

Bertram was attracted to Andromeda because of the Gene Roddenberry tag preceding the title.

"I remember as a kid watching Next Generation, so I grew up familiar with the whole Roddenberry legacy," she said. "I came in mostly because of Gene Roddenberry's name and I thought it was exciting just to experiment with sci-fi because I don't have a lot of experience in that realm."

Before signing on for Andromeda, Bertram's exposure to science fiction was relegated to an episode of Deepwater Black (a.k.a. Mission Genesis). There, she had a guest spot on the series which featured Andromeda co-star Gordon Michael Wolvett and Star Trek: Deep Space Nine's Nicole de Boer.

Indeed, had it not been for the opportunity to work on a Gene Roddenberry production, Bertram would have been content to pursue more traditional dramas and period pieces.

"But now that I've done sci-fi, I think I would pursue sci-fi again," she said. "It was just my inexperience that it wasn't an immediate desire for me.

"You want to stick with something that is familiar and something that you believe you can achieve as an actor. It's safe doing something that you've done before and can draw upon.

"Whereas doing something like sci-fi for the first time is quite an overwhelming experience. Once you get into it, it

First season was learning experience for the Toronto actress as she honed

becomes more routine."

The first season has been a learning experience for the actress. From episode to episode, she has picked up the fine points of doing a fight scene and working with special effects. Bertram says she's also been helped by the other cast members who are "much more seasoned than me.

"I'm always learning from them."

But it is clear that her fellow cast members believed Bertram is the seasoned veteran on the crew.

"She's been in TV since she was about 13 and she's 22 now," Lisa Ryder said of her co-star's sizeable resume. "So, she's a veteran.

"She's very good at what she does and artistically she's a very strong actress."

Bertram did bring a wealth of acting experience to Andromeda.

In Canada, she is best know for her five-season stint on Ready or Not (see in the U.S. on the Disney Channel). She also appeared in Dear America...So Far From, Seasons of Love, Third Eye and Are You Afraid of the Dark. She also received two Gemini Awards, as well as three nominations.

But her work ethic draws a true sense of awe from her. After shooting of the first season wrapped, Bertram returned to university to work on her history degree. It was a step which led more than one co-star to sing Bertram's praises.

Like Wolvett, Bertram came into the audition process late. Busy on another project, she missed the first round and came in for the second round.

"We"re trying to find an elfish spirit. ... somebody who had incredible buoyancy of spirit and charm and beauty and also great depth," Eastman said of Bertram's selection as Trance.

Getting the role was a thrill and after a season as Trance Gemini under her belt, it is a role that has exceeded Bertram's expectations.

"It is much more involved that regular filmmaking in the sense there is green-screen material to do ... acting to things that aren't there. So it's more demanding in a physical sense," Bertram explained. "Imagination-wise, you obviously have to suspend your disbelief."

Adding to the demands of the role, is the ordeal of spending up to six hours having make up applied and

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her fighting skills and became accustomed to working with special effects

getting used to working with special effects.

"It was a real leap for me, " she said. "When your used to having 40 minutes for hair, dress and make-up, it was quite a change."

While the special-effects crew made it easier on her and the rest of the cast by explaining what would appear in the final scene, there have been times when working with a green screen was unsettling for the Toronto native.

"There were a couple of scenes where I absolutely had no idea of what to expect and it changes your whole perception," she recalled. "But somehow it seems to work."

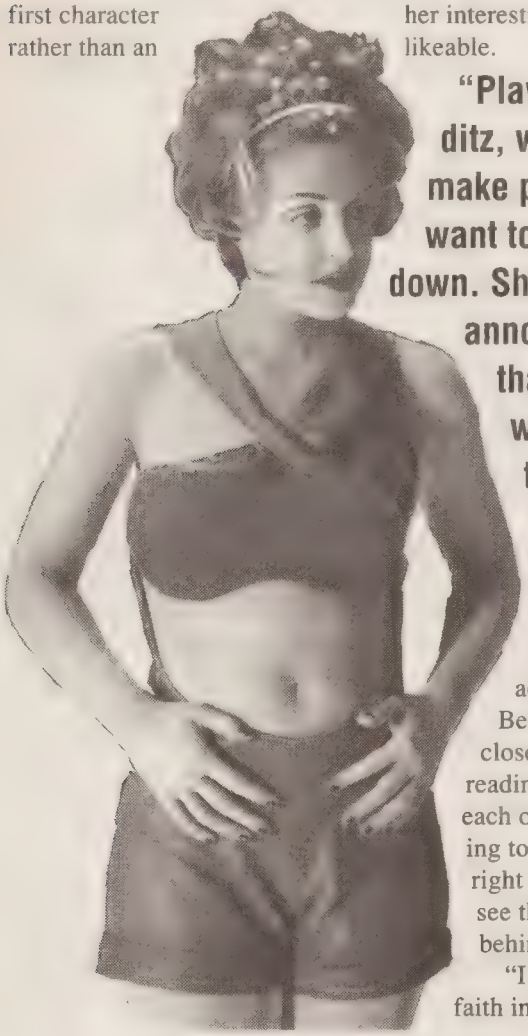
Trance also represents the first character rather than an adaptation that Bertram has played.

"I could usually relate to them," she explains. "With Trance, I've taken what I thought my ideas of what a little girl is like and turned her into Trance.

"She's inquisitive and interested in what other people are doing and wants to join in and doesn't make the right decision."

Hitting on this approach took Bertram a couple of scripts, basically because there is a fine line to be walked between "being a ditz and being innocent.

"She is a young person and is still inexperienced and she wants to learn. Choosing the innocence path was not a difficult one because it made her interesting as well as likeable.



"Playing a ditz, would just make people want to shut her down. She'd be the annoying one that people would want to kill."

On the set, Bertram and Brent Strait (the token aliens, according to Bertram) work closely together - reading lines to each other and trying to decide on the right dialogue and see the logic behind their lines.

"I've placed my faith in the writers, notably Robert Hewitt Wolfe, he's the mastermind behind the development of the series," she said. "My character developed a lot during the first season.

"From the initial piece that I got during the audition to what you see on television, it's not the same character at all."

While Wolfe has a vision of the character, that vision offers enough freedom for Bertram to "add a bit of quirkiness that wasn't there before and then adapt it."

Bertram points out that, as an actor, it isn't her job to interfere with the character's development. I have to provide a visual representation of what they're writing."

And there will be a great deal of development in the character as the series progresses through the second season.

"Trance is the character who will evolve the most as the series goes along," said Eastman.

During the early days of the series, it was a difficult development — particularly for Bertram.

"Purple bubblehead."

After the premier episode, that was a description one Internet user posted regarding Trance. It was a comment which initially stung Bertram, until she realized that no one ... including her ... knew the character. But after a number of episodes the comments stopped as viewers began to see there was more to Trance.

"She was a work in progress."

In fact, the clandestine nature of the character has become one of the attractions of Trance. Her motivations - outside wanting to be part of the crew - are unclear to viewers and to the actress.

"Robert Wolfe has been really good about keeping her a secret," Bertram said. ☆

After the premiere episode of Andromeda, Bertram headed for the Internet to gauge fan reaction. Even thought the harsh criticism has slowed, she came away from her first online visit with the phrase, "purple bubblehead" etched in her mind.

SPLIT PERSONALITY

Lexa Doig kept busy filling three diverse roles

As the ship, the avatar and the hologram, Doig pulls triple duty

You could excuse Lexa Doig for feeling like she has a split personality.

After all, she does play three characters on Gene Roddenberry's Andromeda.

They may look the same, but they are different.

On the series, Doig plays the ship, Andromeda Ascendant (the artificial intelligence which is only seen on a screen), there's the hologram and there's the humanoid body.

"There's a couple of levels to Andromeda.," explained Allan Eastman, the series' executive producer. "Technically, it's very difficult for an actor because out of necessity, Andromeda splits into three different personalities .. the artificial intelligence that is the root program of the ship, the hologram who does the interaction with the crew and avatar who is an android where the introduction of flesh and hormones creates human emotions in essentially a robot character.

"There are very interesting technical requirements for that actor to differentiate three parts of one personality."

When Eastman was casting the series, Doig sprung to mind. The two had worked together almost eight years earlier on TekWar where she had a recurring role as a cyberjack.

"On TekWar..she was 19 and she was amazing," Eastman recalls. "Lexa was someone who jumped into my mind when I started looking for Andromedas and she came through.

"We wanted Andromeda to have an exotic mix and Lexa is just a beautiful woman."

A big fan of Star Trek: the Next Generation, Doig was also thrilled to be part of Gene Roddenberry's legacy with Andromeda.

The new series isn't Doig's first exposure to the Roddenberry legacy .. directly and indirectly.

She had a small role in Earth: Final Conflict and before that on TekWar

"Gene Roddenberry is a legend as far as the science fiction genre goes. I was thrilled to land a part on Andromeda," Doig explains. "I felt that way with TekWar when I worked with William Shatner."

Her stint of TekWar marked Doig's first professional gig.

Shatner

"I remember when I went to audition for the first movie, I was really nervous and my agent was trying to talk me down by saying, 'Don't worry, William Shatner probably won't be there. There'll probably be a reader and a camera guy'.

"Well, there was no camera, no reader ... just William Shatner."

When she shot her first episode, Doig recalls that she was so green that she didn't know the terminology and "just sat there in awe of William Shatner who was directing the movie.

"I was terrified."

Beyond his reminiscence of her from TekWar, Eastman knew that Doig was capable of playing what she describes as "facets of the same personality.

"The hologram is probably the most aggressive and warlike and the one with the most attitude, the AI is the most clinical ... almost

like the older sister."

In fact, Doig says she approaches the three characters as if they were three sisters with Rommy being the youngest because, "She also has an experiential component to her. The ship was built to have a personality and emotions and she has physical reactions to those emotions - like your throat tightens up when you get nervous or your eyes hurt when you get hurt.

"These are all odd to her and she doesn't like it very much. She has no desire to be human."

Like any series, many of the characters' facets are polished as the series progresses.

Because of financial contraints, some of the dialogue which should be handled by either the AI or the hologram is shifted to the humanoid body in order to save on special effects costs. As a result, "sometimes the characterizations get lost a little bit because we have to flip back and forth."

This means, Doig says, that expositional dialogue which would be better presented by the AI or the hologram is presented by Rommy.

"A lot of it is a process of discovery. The writers have an idea of where the character should go," she explained. "And it's always hard when you're an actor because you're the one embodying that role. You're the one who's living that role. You think of it as your part and you fight battles for your character.

"But at the same time, the writers ... particularly Robert Hewitt Wolfe (the series co-executive producer and head writer)... had been living with this character for years before I even saw it."

Of course, there was the usual fears of being typecast, but those fears paled compared to the fear of not being able to pay the rent.

"I figured that at the end of my contract, I'll be able to put Andromeda on my resume." "As long as I'm vigilant about my hiatus to keep my chops up in other things and not be thought of as 'that chick from Andromeda'."

In addition to developing the character, Doig, Wolfe and the rest of the creative staff not only have to develop her character, they also have to decide on her place in the relationship between crew members and in the Andromeda universe.

"They're being confronted with these questions about the characters as they go along and develop these interesting stories."

Of course, as the series progresses it becomes easier for Doig and the writing staff to decide what the three characters would and would not do in a particular situation.

"We wanted Andromeda to have an exotic mix."

Between is the actress who must bring the character to life and the writers who created the character and her world, there is a middle ground where their views meet. Doig points out that for the first season, they explored the territory together and have created a character — in the form of Rommy — with great potential to grow.

"She has these new human experiences and emotions to deal with, yet handling it like a computer would," Doig explains, pointing to the first season episode where the character falls in love. "She probably won't let that happen again.

"But there's the question if she's going to make the same mistakes a human will

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Lexx items on virtual auction block

A second virtual auction featuring items from Lexx has been announced.

The event begins on May 14, and will consist of 12 separate auctions (two per week), ending on June 25.

In addition to autographed scripts and postcards, bidders will have a chance to win costumes and props from the second season of Lexx.

Costumes include those featured in the episodes Brigadoom, Woz, Twilight, Patches in the Sky and Nook.

All items will include a certificate of authenticity.

The first Lexx auction, which included autographed posters and scripts, brought inmore than $1,000 for the Children's Wish Foundation.

"Based on the success of the last auction, we have decided to host another so that Lexx fans around the world can have another opportunity to own a piece of this show," says Gulam Baloch, producer of Bargoon.com.

Lexx follows the nomadic existence of four misfit characters who have inadvertently stolen the most powerful weapon of destruction ever made: a Manhattan-sized, sentient, genetically modified insect named the Lexx.

make and if she will learn from them. As Rommy, will she act like a human or will she learn from her mistakes.

"There's a lot of room for growth and discovery."

As shooting on the Andromeda's second season gets under way, Doig hopes that her characters become a little more darker, cynical and guarded since the character's experiences during the first season weren't pleasant.

"When you get hurt, you build walls and I'd like to see more of that happen."

But Doig notes, much of that decision is in the writers' hands, "whatever they put on the page, that's what I have to do," and falls under the perview of seeking a middle ground.

Playing a space ship at the outer reaches of the galaxy is far removed from from Doig's first foray into acting. At six, she wrote, directed and acted in a Strawberry Shortcake play in her home.

"I gave up the lead role to my best friend and I played Lemon Merange. I was humble, but I always wanted to be an actress."

After seeing a Toronto production of Porgy and Bess, Doig was hooked.

In high school, she took drama courses. But rather than pursue a university degree in Fine Arts, Doig - who was a "typical angry kid" - dropped out of high school and began working as a model and did some commercial work. Even though she didn't relish the work, it did give her a good perspective on the industry and who the good agents are.

Growing up, Doig was steeped in science and science fiction at home. Her father worked with computers and her brother is an honour computer science student at the University of Waterloo whose hobbies included astronomy so the Doig household "Had every book by Carl Sagan that was ever written and every single video tape ... billions and billions of them."

A longtime fan of Star Trek and science fiction, Lexa Doig has had roles in Earth: Final Conflict and TekWar before joining Andromeda. This summer, she (along with Lisa Ryder) battles a manical killer in Jason X.

"I've always been a sci-fi fan. I wasn't a huge fan, but I grew up watching Star Trek," Doig explained.

"So it's kind of fun to be working on a sci-fi show and seeing how it's really done.

"Of course, it kind of ruins it a little bit."

Down the road, Doig wouldn't mind returning the the stage.

"I'd love to do it, but I'm terrified of it," she said of working on the stage. "But it's such a daunting task.

But her real goal is to tackle some comedic roles or work on a sitcom.

"I'm funny, I really am."

From viper pit to deep space

Andromeda allows executive producer Allan Eastman to indulge in two loves

Photos TM and ©2Warner Bros Television

Executive producers Allan Eastman (left) and Robert Hewitt Wolfe helmed Andromeda through its development and into its first season in syndication.

Even though he'd always been interested in film as he grew up, Eastman never set out to be a filmmaker.

Yet, in more than 25 years in the business, Eastman's resume boasts some 200 television episodes and four feature films.

For the first three years of his time at the University of Manitoba, Eastman pursued double majors of literature and politics — both of which, Eastman notes, have been useful to his filmmaking, although the latter more than the former.

In his final year, the door to Eastman's career was opened when Fred Edel started the university's film school. It was an event that transformed the west-end kid and set him on the path toward becoming a filmmaker.

Sitting in his Vancouver production office for Andromeda, Eastman recalls the change Edel and the school held for him.

"Through him, I started to see Bergman and others and got bitten by the bug," he said. "I'd always been interested in film, I'd always loved film, but I never knew how they were made."

After graduation, Eastman received a crash course in what kind of effort is needed to bring films to the screen.

Edel secured a spot for his former student at the Film School at the University of Bristol. There, Eastman was tossed into the world of gonzo filmmaking.

"At Bristol, you wrote, directed, produced ... it was all very practical experience," he recalls. "You come out of it as a pretty complete filmmaker. But no school ever tells you what a viper pit the business is."

While the lesson plans didn't include strategies for surviving the viper pit, they did provide the solid foundation Eastman needed to take the next step. And he graduated at the perfect time to ride the upswing in the industry.

"I came out of film school in 1975 at about the time the Canadian film industry was really getting started ... I was able to get one of those $125,000 features," Eastman recalls.

"I wanted to be Orson Welles, but I didn't have any problem with jumping into television, because I thought it was better to make films than to spend a year or two trying to get another movie together.

"So I spent the next five years making tons and tons of wholesome family entertainment."

Back then, Eastman cut his teeth on a number of beloved Canadian productions.

"I worked on Littlest Hobo, Beachcombers, Road To Avonlea and Danger Bay. It was a great learning experience."

From there, he has gained a formidable reputation for his directorial work in such science fiction and fantasy productions as Star Trek: Voyager, Star Trek: Deep Space 9, Sliders, The Outer Limits, Poltergeist and Robocop.

Such productions allow Eastman to indulge in his two passions — filmmaking and science fiction.

Eastman's mother was a fan of science fiction literature and pushed her son to read Robert Heinlein novels early on.

"I think I've always been interested in the science and the ideas that inform science fiction," Eastman said. "I agree with Heinlein that the earth is too small a nest for the human race to put all its eggs in.

"I think the evolution of the race is off the planet ... it's just taken us a little longer than he thought."

With Andromeda, Eastman manages to get viewers off the planet for about an hour at a time and to deal with some of the issues which lie at the heart of science fiction through the adventures of Kevin Sorbo, Keith Hamilton Cobb, and Canadian actors Lisa Ryder, Laura Bertram, Lexa Doig, Gordon Michael Wolvett and Brent Stait as the crew of the Andromeda.

Thanks to the open-ended structure of the series, Eastman said, there is little difficulty working "big issues" into the storyline. In fact, Eastman notes, having a series based on a "big idea," inevitably leads to conflict, action and the issues.

"It's important that the show be all those things," he said. "That the show have action, that it have ideas and that it be really entertaining."

From a creative stand-

point, Eastman enthuses that the potential of the genre as a dramatic medium is unparalleled.

"There's nothing that you can't imagine that can't be done in science fiction," Eastman explained. "It's a beautiful structure to deal with interesting dramatic issues, to deal with interesting social issues ... to work very human stories into a context, that by its very nature is very extreme."

The filmmaker revels in the speculative nature of, "what's out there," he says, of science fiction.

"What's great about this show and science fiction in general is that you're never locked into anything." He said. "A show like this needs to evolve in its ideas and it needs to evolve as a dramatic form because there are no limitations to it.

"The only limitations to what can happen on this show is our imagination."

Special effects — of which Andromeda uses many — assist in the task of giving form to the producers' and writers' imagination. But if the series is to survive beyond its 44-episode commitment, Eastman notes, the show will need substance.

"All of the filmmaking magic can't help you if the audience doesn't care about the characters. Î always believed that you have to work from the actors out. You can't tell your story by imposing it on the actors and the filmmaking structure."

"Our strength is the cast and how their characters evolve."

Evolving

Like any new series, Andromeda was not without its growing pains.

Actors had to get used to their characters and to each other, production team members had to tinker with the series' numerous effects as the look and direction of the series is refined and the creative team at the helm had to adapt their vision to the abilities of the cast and crew - as well as to opportunities afforded by the 22 storylines in the first season.

"The show is an evolution. We've got an idea of where we want to go over the first five seasons," Eastman said "Every show we do, we learn something new about the direction where we may be headed and we make those adjustments."

Looking back on the season, Eastman is pleased with how the series has developed.

"I really feel that we've gotten better and better as the season has gone on. There's a point that happens with any new series and it's usually about five or six episodes in when both the production and the characters really lock in and that's where you take off from," Eastman said. "And that's what really happened to us around the time of Double Helix."

There will be some subtle

Continued on page 98

Writer well-versed in Roddenberry universe

With stints on Next Generation and Deep Space Nine, Robert Hewitt Wolfe was perfect choice to bring series to life

As much as Andromeda has the name "Gene Roddenberry" before it, many on the cast and crew will tell you that the series bears the stamp of Robert Hewitt Wolfe.

Like the series' lead character, the proposal was frozen, locked away in the eddies of Roddenberry's many projects and ideas, only to be revived years later. When it came time to make the project a reality, Wolfe was the man tapped to fire up the engines.

Wolfe took Roddenberry's notes (which topped out at about a foot-high) for Andromeda and turned it into a series.

Wolfe, who serves as Andromeda's co-executive director and head writer, read through the massive pile of notes, compiled aspects which would work and then put it together into a proposal. It was a process which took between two and three weeks.

Of course, Wolfe also had to keep from falling under the shadow of Roddenberry's better-known productions.

"You still want to be true to what Gene stood for and the question is 'How much does that dictate story and dictate character?'," Wolfe explained. "The thing is to have something that is different from Star Trek, but is still identifiably Gene Roddenberry."

Three main aspects from Roddenberry's notes made it to the final production, says Wolfe and they serve as three linchpins for the series. The characters of Dylan and Andromeda, the sentient starship were taken from the notes.

"And the essential premise of the show, which is someone from a high civilization who gets suspended in time and awakens and tries to rebuild that civilization," Wolfe expained.

"Most of the rest is mine."

One of the major innovations to Roddenberry's idea was to split Andromeda into three characters.

"Gene wanted a fully sentient mechanical starship with a full range of human emotions and would pass a turing test," he explained.

But while only three main aspects of the series were developed by Roddenberry, this is not to say his influence was not felt throughout the development process. While Roddenberry did not create specific characters such as Tyr or Seamus Harper, his notes and practices were essential as Wolfe brought them to life in the effort to create characters which would complement Dylan Hunt.

"Because Gene was working on this in the '70s, cyberpunk hadn't even raised its ugly head in science fiction yet," Wolfe said of the character whose name was cannibalized from one of the other projects Roddenberry was working on. "So Harper was pretty much an original. You can blame me for him.

"It's my fault."

"Robert Hewitt Wolfe is a tremendous writer," Gordon Michael Wolvett (Harper) said.

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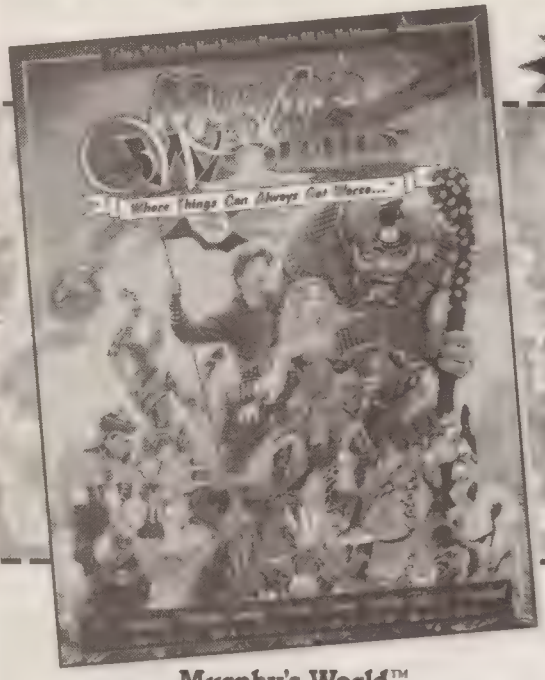

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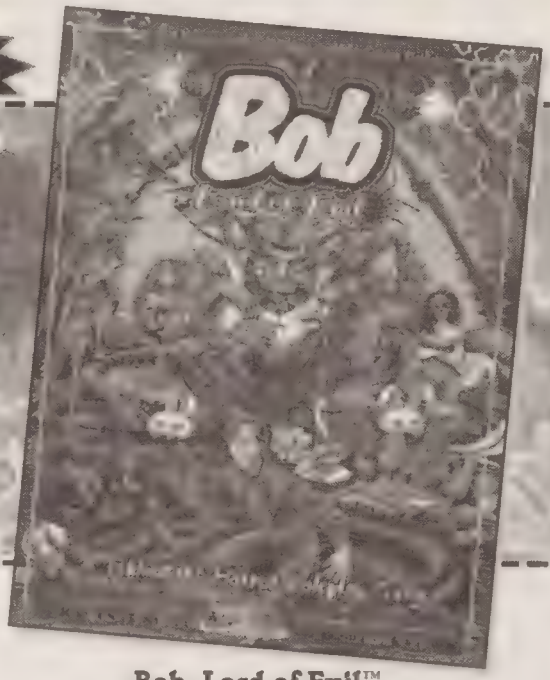

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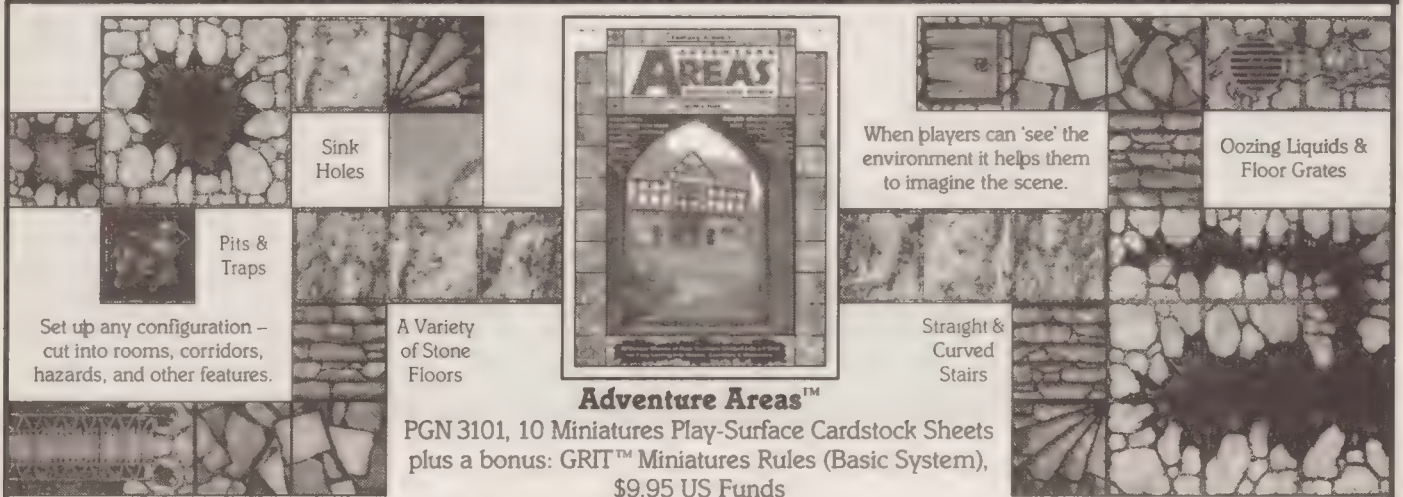
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Wolfe

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In fact, Wolfe borrowed heavily from Roddenberry's other projects to flesh out the crew and the world of Andromeda.

"Gene had certain archetypal characters that he kept coming back to in certain projects," Wolfe said of the creation of Tyr "He had an idea for genetically engineered villains.

"So Tyr was a combination of the two."

But melding aspects of Roddenberry's notes with his own ideas was only part of the process for Wolfe, he still had to follow the basic rules of scriptwriting and storytelling.

Even though Roddenberry's widow, Majel Roddenberry, has guarded her late husband's legacy since his death decade ago, she took a hands-off approach when it came to Andromeda.

"She was there, but it was more of a supervisory role. She was looking over the stuff that was done and saying, 'Yeah, that works or no, that doesn't'," Wolfe explained. "Her main concern was that we were true to Gene's values and to where he was coming from. That was where her focus was."

Of course, Wolfe has been steeped in Roddenberry's legacy for a number of years.

Wolfe originally entered UCLA as an engineering student, but lost interest and entered the film program.

After he lost money making his first movie and made money selling his first story, Wolfe's choice was clear.

"It was cheaper to buy a typewriter."

Wolfe got his start in television on Star Trek: The Next Generation after writing one of the series' episodes entitled A Fistful of Datas in season five, which quickly became a fan favorite. Wolfe's original screenplay was "more How the West was Won," while the revision by Brannon Braga altered the nature of the piece to more "High Noon."

But while he's ambivalent about the western genre, the same cannot be said for his current specialty.

"I didn't set out to be a science fiction writer, I just wanted to be a working writer," Wolfe said. "But it happens to be a genre where all the work I've gotten is in and I really enjoy it."

Plus, it is a genre which lets Wolfe indulge his preference for epic-sized stories.

"I've never been good at small character pieces."

After his stint on Star Trek: The Next Generation, he handled writing chores on Star Trek: Deep Space Nine for five years. He wrote more than 30 episodes. During his last two seasons with the series, he also acted as producer.

In addition, Wolfe co-authored Legends of the Ferengi, a published work of science fiction focusing on the guiding principles of the Ferengi civilization

"I knew what I was getting into, I knew the fan expectations and I walked into this eyes wide open," Wolfe said. "I knew what it was like to work in a Roddenberry universe and where things could be done differently."

One thing that he doesn't want to do differently is the handling of the creative forces behind writing the series. Wolfe says, as head writer, he strives to create the same atmosphere as Ira Steven Behr did on Deep Space Nine.

"I try to do as good a job as he did in being a show runner and handling the writing staff."

Working on Deep Space Nine also gave Wolfe a taste of the challenge of creating a series pretty much from scratch.

"The audience was very invested in Next Generation when Deep Space Nine came on the air," he explained. "And a lot of viewers didn't warm up to the slightly darker and slightly edgier characters on Deep Space Nine.

"It was a similar exercise in creating the series."

What made Andromeda a little easier was the presence of Kevin Sorbo.

He provided the known quantity for Andromeda that Deep Space Nine lacked when it premiered. Sorbo had a following thanks to his stint on Hercules and viewers like him from that time, so they came to Andromeda because of his presence.

"But, there were some negatives," Wolfe explained. "People don't know how difficult it was to do a series like Hercules, so they under-estimate him as an actor.

"He just made it look so easy, that people didn't think it was acting."

While Sorbo has been attached to Andromeda and the character of Dylan Hunt since the early days, the other characters were blank slates when it came to putting actors in their shoes.

"You have to write the characters before you cast the show," he explained. "Then, once they've been with the characters for awhile, you can look at the characters and see what's working and what's not working and where to tweak the character.

"That's just a part of any show."

Thanks to a good casting process, the tweaking for the first season was minimal.

One area that was tweaked during the season was the way in which Tyr spoke.

Because of Keith Cobb's Shakespearean and stage background, the character's speech was changed to a more elaborate form than the matter-of-fact pattern Wolfe and the producers had originally intended to use.

"He was supposed to be more Steve McQueen," Wolfe said. "But he comes across a little more like Errol Flynn.

"But that's one of the fun things about this job, the alchemy of actor-plus-role."

Bierk wields her magic on the set

New Sorceress injects some humour into series

Interviews by A.Jaye Williams

Photo courtesy of Alliance Atlantis

Dylan Bierk looks to bring a different feeling to the character of the Sorceress on The Beastmaster.

After just a year as an actor, former model Dylan Bierk found herself on the set of BeastMaster. It is a setting far removed from the small Canadian city where she grew up.

Born in Northern California, Dylan Bierk moved to Canada when she was about six. "My mother is Canadian, so we moved to Canada. I grew up in Peterborough, Ont., and left there right after high school to model."

Both her parents were in artistic fields and so they were always supportive of her and her brothers, Zac Bierk, a goalie who's played for the Tampa Bay Lightning and the Minnesota Wild, and former Skid Row front man Sebastian Bach, who had an incredible run on stage in the musical Jekyll and Hyde, in New York.

But her career really started when she went to New York after high school to visit Sebastian and her father. It was there she met an agent and began modeling for six years.

When asked about the comparisons between modeling and acting, Bierk remarks, "You get to dress up!"

More literally she adds, with a bit of self-criticism, "I wasn't a very good model, I mean, I was really successful, but I was always told when I was modeling that I was an actress more than a model. So I did more of the theatrical, like a runway and editorial, because I found it fun.

"The thing I enjoyed about it was the creative part, making the photograph, being put into hair and makeup, and being put into a situation."

In the second season of BeastMaster, starting at roughly the 10th episode, Bierk was introduced as the new Sorceress.

"Visually, I'm completely different from the original Sorceress.

"My costume is much more 5th Element, less Dolly Parton in the rainforest," she says. "I'm also much more active in the storylines. I also have a real sense of humour."

The character known as the Ancient One, the mentor and sorcerer supreme to the Sorceress, also bares the brunt of the more wild personality that the new Sorceress exhibits. Whether it's patting him on the butt, with a nod and a wink, or involving herself in the matters of mortals and the environment.

In contrast to the first season, the second season aimed at a younger audience with the addition of younger cast members. As well as Bierk, there was David Paterson, Marjean Holden and Sam Healy. Some of the characters are allies, some villains, some are chaotic elements who have a purpose all their own.

The audition for BeastMaster seemed to go as smoothly as any actor could only hope for.

"I (went) to see Alliance Atlantis and did a monologue, and basically, they were trying to figure out what series would be right for me.

"I was auditioning for a few series' at the time and when you hear what they were looking for, it was a good fit," Bierk recalls.

"I'm amazed. In just the last few episodes, it's amazing how the writing and this character is me. Although

I'm the Sorceress, so I'm meant not to have emotions, you see me having a (bit more of) a moral conscience.

"I'm drawn to Dar and his ideas because I see the destruction of humanity and King Zad and Voden and I believe in the cause that Tao and Dar are fighting for."

Her attraction to the show didn't come until she watched some episodes.

"When I got the tapes they sent me, and when I looked at the show, I felt like this show had a movie quality to it. The visuals are authentic, we're not with the paper-mache rocks. We're out here with the snakes, the koala bears. So, I think visually, it's the real-deal."

is being threatened, that the animals are being threatened. I have a conscience; I can't sit by and watch it."

But the challenge for the Sorceress is balancing her conscience and personal beliefs with that of the Ancient One — who doesn't believe that they should get directly involved with mortals.

As well as a conscience, the other characteristic unique to Bierk's Sorceress is that she has a sense of humour, paralleling her own personality, and strongly contrasting Schnarre's more subtle and inquisitive Sorceress.

"I think that humour is really important. I think that the show could use a little humour, and that's my personality,

Bierk wouldn't even be surprised if the "cool" look of the Sorceress struck a chord with the young girls out there.

"I can imagine if I was a little girl, I'd probably be wearing my hair like that and try doing the make-up the same way. Visually, she's pretty special."

Being one of the new characters — and actors — on BeastMaster, Bierk can't say enough about how wonderful it is working with the cast.

The support, the learning experiences, and the sheer fun Bierk has working with Daniel Goddard, Jackson Raine and, particularly, Graham Bond, is clearly some of the best moments she's ever had on screen.

"I think that the show could use a little humour, and that's my personality, too.

Bierk also mentions the importance the show plays on many levels of humanity. The stories deal with the animals, the environment, and the people of the planet. The show has a strong and potent conscience, and "there's depth and weight to the scripts and to the story that's going to hold you there."

Bierk also wants to add her own flavour to the character of the Sorceress, to make sure it is not just a carbon-copy of Monika Schnarre's version of the character.

Though there are obviously similarities between the two actors — both are ex-models turned actors — Bierk is keenly aware of the importance of creating a distinct and uniquely different character than Schnarre's.

Describing her approach to the character, Bierk says, "I think it has to come from me. Physically, I want her to be more involved, to be stronger, to learn from the Ancient One but grow. Take the knowledge and grow into my own self. I believe the other Sorceress just maintained a certain servile, subservient (role) and I think that'll get real old unless I become someone who makes decisions and learns from the knowledge he passes onto me."

Bierk emphasizes that though her character is an apprentice to the Ancient One, she still has "a big heart.

"I care about the planet. I don't believe in the adage we can't get involved when it means that the planet

too. I've got a funny sense of humour. I'm a little more tongue-in-cheek. You'll see a little Lucille Ball coming out!" she adds with a wry chuckle.

Her philosophy is simple: "I think fun actors are fun to watch."

Fun seems to be ingrained in the Sorceress role. Bierk is exuberant when describing her childhood dream of portraying a superhero, dressing up in a outrageous costume and looking the part of some out-worldly fantasy.

"I feel like a kind of comic book super hero. I'm in this leather sort of Barbarella meets Wonder Woman costume, with blond hair down to my butt, and I get to...zap (the) bad guys, and fight evil for (the side of) good. I mean it's everything I dreamed of when I was a little girl."

As the Sorceress, she admits that the male viewers will be attracted to the character for aesthetic reasons, but she also notes the appeal of the Sorceress is the fact that she's a very smart and strong person. Seeing a strong, beautiful, and intelligent woman portrayed on screen can only have a positive influence, in which young girls and women can see as a motivational and inspirational example. Whether it's the example of her physicality, or her natural beauty, or the way she conducts herself.

"I think women are going to look at her and girls are going to look at her and say 'look at her, she's fighting for something.'"

"It's great! I'm having a blast! Bond, we just clicked. We play some good "tennis" matches in the scenes we've done together! We look like we have history. When I go to (the) set there's just a great vibe. Everyone is really mellow."

About the actors, Bierk adds, with an emphasis, that "it's really wonderful to work with people like Jackson and Daniel because they care about the show, they care about how it's done, they care about the storylines, they care about their characters."

Aside from the work on BeastMaster, Bierk has kept busy with guest-spots on Relic Hunter and Andromeda.She also found time to take on a role in this summer's Jason X.

The bottom line for Bierk is the quality of the work. Although it would be a dream to work with such great directors as Martin Scorsese, Quentin Tarantino or Atom Egoyan, it's the work that's important to her.

On screen, Bierk believes "the character has to be truthful and have a soul and see the human struggle in it."

Another important factor for Bierk is the message of the film.

If a message or an aspect about a movie script really strikes a chord with her and it is something she believes in, then it wouldn't matter who the director, writer, or producer was. Big picture or small independent, it's the work that matters. ☆

If you could talk to the animals...

Daniel Goddard finds parallels between his life and the life of Dar on the Beastmaster

Recognized for his striking good looks and phenomenal physical conditioning, Daniel Goddard has brought to life the warrior first seen on celluloid more than 15 years ago.

The character of Dar, in BeastMaster the series, is a far cry from Marc Singer's movie version. With the advantages that television offers, such as much further character development and storyline development, Goddard has brought to life a multi-dimensional, charismatic hero that has faults and weaknesses, as well as great strengths and abilities.

Born in Australia more than 28 years ago, Goddard became interested in acting almost right away.

"When I was a little kid, probably about seven, I started doing school plays. And then I pretty much did a play each year. When I left school, I wanted to get into acting school but I went into college instead... (and) studied economics."

But economics wasn't Goddard's lot in life as a career, even though his parents wished it.

"I went to acting school, and then from there I started getting work, and have been lucky enough to be doing it since."

While growing up and still today, Goddard admires many great actors of our times. Most notably, the likes of Al Pacino and Daniel Day Lewis, in which he says about Lewis, "his commitment to a role I think is...it's like Gary Oldman, I mean, they take a role and actually, like, play the character, live the character ... It's an extreme way of doing it but when you play an extreme role, it's a good way to get under the skin of it."

He also adds, that he really admires and appreciates "the sort of actor that ... make(s) you realize something at the end of the film about yourself, you know. I'm a great fan of Denzel Washington. See the work he did in Malcolm X. And then you actually see the Malcolm X video or documentry footage, and it's uncanny! It's obvious Denzel has something he wanted to express."

Goddard admits that he's adapted some of the same acting techniques. When on set, he doesn't like to mingle with the same members of the cast that his character doesn't. He's clear and professional about this to the other actors, so they understand his approach and know not to take offence.

He likens the evolution of his relationship with co-star Jackson Raine with that of Dar and Tao's.

As Dar and Tao's relationship evolved, likewise did Goddard's and Raine's. His fellow actors know this about him and respect it, too.

Prior to BeastMaster, Goddard starred in the Australian soap opera, Home and Away.

As well, he did some theater, like the musical South Pacific. When he moved to Los Angeles, he did some more plays, and had a guest role on Baywatch.

When BeastMaster came along, Goddard says, "The first time I saw the script for it, I was traveling down to Florida to see Cirque du Soleil. I'd gotten to the point in my life where I'd realized that everything shouldn't be so complex. So, I sort of just read it once, and put it away, and (when I) got back, I auditioned for it, got called back a couple of times. On the third call back, I met Steve Feke, who's the creator and executive producer, and we got on very well, we were very much on the same page.

"Another three auditions later, I met the network, and then on the sixth or seventh one I got it. But the irony is, come the third one, I'd already resigned myself to the belief that if I was going

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"We all get bruised up. I'm just covered in cuts and bruises now, either from the ferrets chewing on me, or from the action stuff, or from running through the bush."

to get it, I was going to get it."

The fact that Goddard didn't want his life to become overly complicated parallels the direction he and Feke wanted the character of Dar to go.

"I talked to Feke when we first started doing the show about how much dialogue Dar should get," Goddard recounts. "And we both came to the conclusion that we didn't want to give him huge diatribes. The simplicity of Dar, which is also his complexity, is that he doesn't have to use vernacular or dialogue. It's more or less 'this is the code I live by. When I need to say something, I'll say it'."

Goddard also adds that the character of Dar has changed over the first two seasons. Coming to an understanding and acceptance that all his people are gone, "Dar has become more of a leader. He's moved on."

This, for Goddard, is wonderful. The character of Dar is not stagnant, forever the same image and person. Instead, he's grown, evolved and changed, just as real people do in real life. Experiences both shape and change people, and Dar has proven to be no different.

Besides developing and expressing the 'inner' Dar, Goddard also finds a great challenge in portraying the outer Dar. As any viewer can tell, Goddard has gone through an incredible physical fitness regimen and martial arts training program. Besides his super-hero-like good looks, the fight scenes and physical challenges are an episodic endeavor that is pulled off successfully and with an artistic flare each week.

To prepare for this kind of extreme challenge, Goddard needed to begin training well before the shooting of the first episode began.

"I got here two months before shooting began. I got here on April 26, 1999, to start training and they got a guy from the Chinese martial arts academy to come out and teach me how to use the staff. I'd never used one before. I started stretching and getting into shape for it. In that two months, I pretty much forged the template for everything that would come after it ... Following the commencement of production, I didn't have anymore time to train because of the long hours and everything that came with the show."

Goddard adds, as a note of importance about physically preparing for the show before production started, "I'm lucky I did that. From that point in time, the training became less and less and I had to find the time on the weekend to go out at night to train. The best thing I can do on-season is to do a lot of push-ups, you know, a lot of sit-ups ... because come night time I'm just too tired to go and do anything (else) and prepare for the next (day's shoot)."

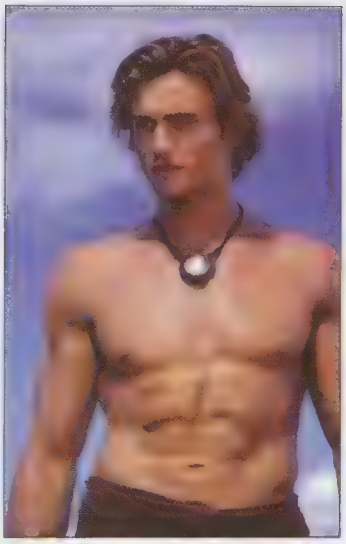

Photo courtesy of Alliance Atlantis

It took two months for Daniel Goddard to learn how to wield a staff and get into shape to portray Dar. Goddard's relationship with Jackson Raine (below) mirrors the friendship between Dar and Tao.

The physical challenges are clearly immense. Portraying a character on screen, memorizing the lines, preparing for the shoot, and the like is one thing, but trying to keep his body as sculpted and as lean and muscular as possible is another matter entirely. One that most other actors don't have to contend with.

Besides the conditioning and fight scenes — or because of them — Goddard proudly talks of all the bruises, cuts, and scratches he has earned.

"We all get bruised up. I'm just covered in cuts and bruises now, either from the ferrets chewing on me, or from the action stuff, or from running through the bush."

In the episode Circle of Life, Goddard had to throw

Jackson Raine on the ground in a scene in which Dar and Tao lose their tempers with each other.

"Some of the takes we had to do when I threw Jackson on the ground ... we did like six takes, because something would go wrong. Everytime I'd ask 'Are you hurt?' and he'd say 'Yeah! Throw me back on the ground!'

"Jackson's so much fun to work with!"

Aside from the physical challenges of making BeastMaster, Goddard enjoys playing out the levels of character and dynamic of Dar, that a good series provides and that is markedly different from other classic fantasy characters.

"You get caught up in the stoicism of a lot of Herculean-type roles, the Conans, etc., and I think a lot of it's too far from the reality of the complexities of the human being. And if a person is going to co-exist with animals in an environment that doesn't have humans in it, then he still has the relationship with the animals that he would have with humans. Therefore, I think, you have to play Dar as a very accessible and very human, very humane character, who has the range of emotion which is not just 'me Dar, (you Jane).' Which is what I wanted to make sure happened."

Goddard is often awestruck at working with the animals on the set. The idea of working with a wild, but trained, tiger that, if it suddenly wanted to, could tear anyone it wanted to pieces, is an unparalleled experience. Goddard explains, "I get to pretty much play and pet a Bengal tiger, which is intimidating in many ways. When it turns and looks at me, and I'm just a foot from it you know that it's an instinctive animal.

"And although you try to domesticate it you can't, and there's no language which you can use and say 'this person means you no harm.'

"So you're always on the adrenaline-thing wondering 'if that tiger turns and looks at me, what's it thinking?' However, I've gotten to the point now where I can look the tiger in the eye, and I can just tell by the look whether or not it's going to swipe at me or it's just going to sit there and start purring."

Goddard also admits that working with the animals, he's become more instinctive, wiser and aware of the world around him and his place in it.

Although he really enjoys and loves working on BeastMaster, Goddard longs to do other work. He has "two scripts that have been pet projects of mine that I've been working on."

Although he's had to pass on other projects due to scheduling conflicts, he adds, that "everything will come in time; that there is no hurry."

Goddard looks forward to satisfying his professional appetite on some strong, character driven drama, as well as some finely written comedy. And like any writer can appreciate, Goddard essentially sums up that "as long as it's well written ... It's all about the script, having ... a character that's real, a three-dimensional character!"

He also adds that the importance of writers should be obvious to the industry: "A good script gives a director something to direct and ... the actors something to act."

☆

Other side of the Beastmaster coin

Jackson Raine relishes playing logical sidekick to Daniel Goddard's Dar

Even though he'd been athletically active before landing the role of Tao, Jackson Raine was not prepared for the rigours of the part as the Beastmaster's companion.

Although there are many obvious differences between Tao and Jackson Raine, there are also many similarities.

Both are intelligent, honest and loyal young men with a lot of drive and energy. Where Tao is forever learning about the world around him, Raine fervently believes that in life, "You never stop learning."

However, a major difference is Raine's prevalent and distinguished Australian accent. But accents aren't much of a problem for the stage-trained actor.

"I started watching a lot of NBC. I saw a lot of similarities between Tao and Bryant Gumbel, but only at the start. It's changed a lot since then," he says with a chuckle.

"Just the way ... words just drip off his tongue ... the way he speaks. And also, a friend helped me as well.

"Luckily, I'd been working before that with a Russian accent and two English accents as well, at the same time doing two plays. Because of that, my ear got trained for accents."

Raine was born in Canberra — Australia's political capital.

"When you go there all the trees are planted in rows — it's a very sedentary state, very sedate."

BeastMaster is filmed on the Gold Coast of Queensland.

"It's a wonderful place to film and a great place to visit. But I'm hanging out to really get myself over to London (and) New York."

Though Raine loves working on BeastMaster, he longs for more of the energy of life.

"I just got back from Los Angeles and the life ... you can feel the energy of the city, and I'm at that point in my life where I'm really busting out for that, you know?"

While growing up, the acting bug has always been in Raine's blood.

Like a wide-eyed child with great aspirations of a successful career in acting, his most-common vision of himself, "Was to be playing in a movie and while the movie's on, I'm down the street in a theater doing a show."

Raine is methodical when it comes to learning from the world around him. During his formative years growing up and attending school, he felt somewhat apart from the so-called normal crowd.

"Teachers loved me but didn't quite get me. As a result, I disassociated myself from the normal growing up in school and I watched and observed and I played up what I saw."

Wherever it seems he looks, Raine can't help but find inspiration, knowledge, and wisdom from the world around him. And this, inevitably, can't help but lead to further growth as both an actor and an individual.

Unlike his klutzy alter-ego on BeastMaster, Raine has been a student of the martial-arts for 10 years.

Being a typically "scrawny kid in school, I used to get picked on a bit, so mom threw me into Tae Kwon Do class, which taught me more about respect and drive."

This harkens back to the actor and the constant learning that is a prevalent part of Raine. It seems that no matter what part of Raine's life he experiences, he can't help but take something from it.

Nothing is wasted; nothing is unimportant; nothing is ignored.

However, when first starting BeastMaster, Raine could have taken some pointers from his younger self. As most any viewer of the show can tell, BeastMaster is a very physically demanding show. There are plenty of action sequences, fight scenes, lots of running, swimming, climbing and the like.

Unfortunately for Raine, he didn't prepare himself physically for the role as much as he thinks he should have.

Raine was not the only one vying for the role of Tao. By the time he had first tried out for the part, the casting for Tao had already been going on three months stretching from Auckland to Toronto.

But "they didn't know what they wanted for Tao. They knew where it had to go but they didn't know how to get there."

When Raine entered the equation, "They were a bit frightened actually ... and they were on the verge of making Tao an older guy ... and then I came along."

He still had to endure four or five callbacks before they finally settled on him. The character of Tao was never thought of as just another supporting part for the hero of Dar, the BeastMaster. The producers wanted someone special and unique, that stood out in his own way.

The union of Tao and Dar is more a partnership than hero and sidekick thing. And like many heroic partnerships throughout history — whether it's the Green Hornet and Kato, Kirk and Spock, or even the Odd Couple — theirs is based on being able to teach each other what is clearly lacking in the other.

They are two sides of the same coin. They balance each other harmoniously, whether it's Dar teaching Tao how to defend himself, or Tao teaching Dar how to read and count. They clearly rely on one another, trust each other, and are loyal to the end. I asked, what really makes these two characters unique from any other pairing.

"Daniel Goddard and Jackson Raine," Raine said candidly. "We're both very individual people. We're both right for the roles. And because how Daniel and I meet on so many levels, it's made Dar and Tao ... well, for me ... watching an interesting pair of people."

"We're both very individual people. We're both right for the roles. And because how Daniel and I meet on so many levels, it's made Dar and Tao ... well, for me ... watching an interesting pair of people."

He also emphasizes that the friendship which has developed between Dar and Tao over the first season has really made the show more interesting and captivating for the audience, and for himself.

For Raine, he really enjoys the intellectual aspect of Tao and, "how it gets in his way."

Tao is very scientifically grounded, and only believes in magic when it is presented before his eyes.

Otherwise, logic and science are his truths. And that often proves to be just as much a hindrance at times as helpful.

"I love seeing when logic works for him; I love seeing what doesn't work for him and he has to all of a sudden think more laterally."

Some of his favourite episodes of the first season were the last two.

"I loved it. The rescue storyline was fantastic. It was just quick and just beautiful to watch."

As well, he has much appreciation for The Circle of Life episode, in which Tao got to lose his temper. What really stands out in his mind about that episode is the big argument between Tao and Dar.

"Daniel and I didn't discuss how we were going to do it. In rehearsal we did the shot and the director looked at us 'Is that how you're going to do it?' 'Yeah.' 'Great! OK. Let's film it.'... I ended up with bruises that day. When he grabbed me, that was seven or eight takes of that and I had the biggest bruise on my chest. It was fantastic!" Raine laughs.

Raine, a big admirer of the science fiction and fantasy genre, admits that the main appeal for such subject matter is simple.

"Pure escapism."

He adds with a philosophical and curious outlook of how the individual person's world is getting smaller: "The world is becoming increasingly small, and because of that increasingly real. We're bombarded by advertising, every newspaper, every magazine, television.

"It cements the reality of the world around you and more and more people are needing to escape."

☆

Bad is always better for Schnarre

Actress set to make return as the Sorceress during Beastmaster's third season

She had a sultry voice mixed with a heart-warming and inviting tone that can't help but capture the wonder and intrigue of those listening to her.

She's one of the most beautiful women in television and movies, who hopes to one day have her very own television series. Standing six-foot-one, Monika Schnarre is a dynamic and compelling presence on screen. These characteristics explain exactly why she was chosen for the part of the Sorceress in the first season of BeastMaster and for the first third of the second season.

Born and raised in Scarborough, Ont., Schnarre graduated from Woburn high school in 1990 before moving to Los Angeles. She was a successful model. But by 18 she grew tired of the experience and all the travel that it entailed.

"I just wanted something more challenging, and with modeling everything was sort of given to me.

"I enjoyed the traveling, but I was also very young. So it was hard to be away from family and friends."

Since leaving modelling, she has appeared in numerous television shows, ranging from Friday the 13th, the series, Sweating Bullets, The Bold and the Beautiful, The Young and the Restless, Caroline in the City, Total Recall 2070, First Wave, Andromeda, and, of course, BeastMaster, among others.

Her success on-camera is well-documented and continues to grow.

The comfort factor of the camera — with stops, breaks, re-dos, and the like — is more than satisfying and fulfilling for Schnarre at this time in her career and life.

Though she has played both the heroine and villain in much of her work, Schnarre relies mainly on the quality of the written material.

The script must be good and the characters interesting to her.

"What I look for, first and foremost, is the writing. I just turned down an audition, because I wasn't jiving with the material," she explains. "But I guess, if it's written well, if the characters are multi-faceted and has lots of different layers and is — it gets boring otherwise."

She adds that the character of the Sorceress is a good example of a challenging and interesting role.

Schnarre emphasizes that "I'm trying to challenge myself more and I'm being more selective."

Schnarre adds, with a child-like laugh, that although it doesn't matter whether the character she's playing is good or bad, it's always enjoyable to play the bad guy.

"It's more fun to be bad," she says. She then immediately adds with further laughter, "I'm so sweet in real life, and it's like therapy, getting out all of my aggression."

On BeastMaster, Schnarre's Sorceress is a character that possesses great

"What I look for, first and foremost, is the writing. I just turned down an audition, because I wasn't jiving with the material"

Monika Schnarre

After more than a season as the Sorceress, Monika Schnarre asked that her character be put aside because she felt she wasn't being used to her potential.

Next issue: JUNGLE WOMEN spectacular with Marjean Holden

power, is human in appearance but not substance, and magically represents both the mysterious and seductive part of humankind.

She flirts with both Dar and King Zad of the show, but she does so only to serve her own goals and desires. Of Dar, she wants to one day possess his abilities to communicate with animals, and King Zad is nothing more than a tool to accomplish that goal.

"The Sorceress was fun to play because in the beginning she had no human emotions, so that was a challenge." That all changed as the series progressed and the Ancient One (the Sorceress' mentor) decided to return the Sorceress' emotions back to her thus, revealing another layer and dimension to the character.

"I liked that when she regained her human emotions, she was more sympathetic and people could empathize with her. She was kind of nasty to start out with, but she really didn't remember that she had once loved.

"And I guess, deep down, even though she was evil sometimes, she was child-like. So it was more forgivable. She had the innocence of a child."

This forced Schnarre (and hence the Sorceress) to show more human characteristics. Over the course of the show, the once-emotionless Sorceress exhibited jealousy, fear, anger, sorrow, longing and humour. For Schnarre, this added to the challenge she seeks in a role.

One challenge Schnarre didn't have to face was a physical one.

Unlike Daniel Goddard, Jackson Raine and Marjean Holden who portray characters who are action-driven,

"I'm happy as long as I'm surprised. That's why when I read the script I said 'They cannot do this.' But they did. So, I thought it was very ballsy."

Schnarre didn't have to do much that could be considered physically demanding. In preparation for the role, Schnarre says she didn't do anything out of the ordinary.

"You know, I always run and go to the gym, so I didn't do much training, but we did have some fight sequences and we rehearsed them, but I pretty much try and stay in shape on my own for whatever may come up."

Landing her part on BeastMaster came about quickly.

"It was pretty much a whirlwind. I auditioned on a Friday and then on Monday, I was screen-testing. So it had happened really fast. I had been out of the country, so I had missed the first round of auditions. When I did finally go in it was at the very end, which I think works for your advantage."

Schnarre can't help but sing the praises of the show. Most particularly, of Holden, whom she worked with on the The Bold and the Beautiful.

"It was fun to have each other; to have a friend on set. There was comaraderie there."

Regarding the rest of the cast, Schnarre adds, "The chemistry? I mean it was good, you know. I think we have a really good cast!" Though her character didn't interact with the heroes that often, Schnarre really enjoyed her time with actors Graeme Bond and Steven Grimes.

Working with such professional and supportive actors are what Schnarre really appreciates and gets off on. Actors who are secure and confident about their ability, and are easy going people, are what makes for an enjoyable experience for her.

When she worked with Kevin Sorbo on Andromeda, Schnarre says, "It was a dream to work with him, because I've worked with a number of lead actors who are just ... you know, given the 'attitude.' And he was very down to earth and a joy.

"It was probably one of my best experiences. Everyone was joking around. It was really just a fun atmosphere."

She would also relish the opportunity to return to Andromeda someday — although she played the part of Pax Magellanic, a sister ship to Andromeda, which was destroyed in the end.

For the present, however, we can look forward to Schnarre's return to BeastMaster during its third season for possibly six episodes.

She explains that she left BeastMaster for the simple, straightforward reason, "I felt my character wasn't being used enough in a timely fashion. I would be sitting around for weeks at a time with nothing to do. I'm one who likes to be busy."

She adds that she wanted her character not to be written out so much as less used or put aside until needed.

Of all the episodes she has done, naturally her favourites are the ones she has appeared in.

The ones that particularly stand out to her are Revelations, which was the last episode of season one, and Rage, which was the last episode she did in season two.

Another episode she makes note of is Gemini.

"I thought it was interesting. I can't believe we got away with it. The twins were kissing. It was very risque. But I like the idea. I just hate predictable movies. I'm happy as long as I'm surprised. That's why when I read the script I said 'They cannot do this.'

"But they did. So, I thought it was very ballsy."

Even though she admits to not being a science fiction/fantasy buff, she confesses that her look contributes to that genre very well.

"The characters are usually wackier and zanier and more fun to play than the girl next door. And my physical appearance. It's a genre that I get hired a lot in, and I can't play 'the girl next door.' I'm just too tall for male actors, she said.

" So for me, it doesn't matter if I'm playing some sort of genetically-altered woman, she can look any which way." ☆

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Actor draws inspiration from telemarketers

When it came to portraying the ancient huckster, actor Robert Trebor drew on some contemporary sources

Photo courtesy of USA Studios

Robert Trebor brought a wealth of experience and obersvations with him when he took the art of being a huckster to the ancient world with his character of Salmoneous.

Trebor had originally auditioned for the part of the slave, Waylin, for one of Hercules: The Journey Begins (later renamed The Lost Kingdom). In landing the part, Trebor made such an impression, that producers kept him in mind when the audience response led to the creation of the series.

"They liked my energy and the comic chemistry that I had with Kevin Sorbo," he recalls. "So when it came time to make the series, they thought that a slave character wouldn't be good as a recurring character, that it would be too limiting.

"So they wrote this character, this wily businessman, a comic entrepreneur with this comic energy in mind."

Had Trebor turned the role down, it would have gone to an open casting process. But the Los Angeles-based actor realized the opportunity that had been presented to him.

"The character was so appealing and I knew there would be so much room for comedic development of the character, that I said 'sure'," he said

What was supposed to be just a two-episode stint turned into a long relationship during the series' run.

"By the time I finished the second episode, they said 'We've written you into a third'," Trebor explained.

From there, Salmoneus moved on to two episodes of the Xena trilogy on Hercules - and, later, recurred on the Xena series.

"It became a popular character, we (Sorbo and Trebor) enjoyed working with each other, the audience enjoyed my energy and I was written into more and more episodes," he said.

John Shulian created "the essence" of the character by watching me perform as Waylan.

"He created the two obsessions ... money and women," Trebor explained.

From there, Trebor rounded out the character by adding a dash of humanity to the character so that "he wasn't just money-grubbing and lecherous."

"Those characters are fun to play but if you're going to be on for more than a couple of episodes, the audience is going to get really tired of that very fast," he said. "Also, you have to watch that because of the Jewish thing.

"I didn't want to play the stereotypical Jewish money-grubbing guy, because I find that offensive."

With Sorbo's and the producers' blessing, the money-grubbing and lecherous side of Salmoneous was toned down and the character's entrepreneurial spirit was let loose. In fact, in some ways, Salmoneous became more akin to an agent than to a businessman. This way, the actor explained, Salmoneous becomes more human and less a stock comic character for the series.

"He was moving society forward in small increments," Trebor explained. "Money was a very pleasant byproduct, but money wasn't the main thing. The main thing was to try to invent or create

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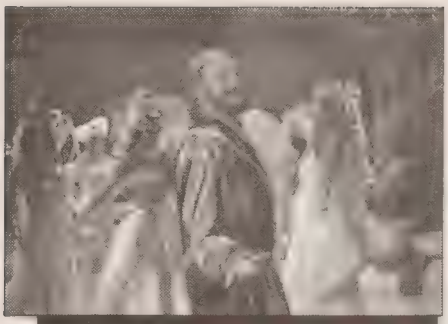

"The deal is sometimes more important and interesting than the money."

or get involved in a deal.

"And the deal is sometimes more important and interesting than the money. He was the guy that was in there trying to mix stuff up, trying to get people, products and ideas together and that was always the way I tried to play him," he said.

Trebor also strove to accentuate the character's optimism regarding a particular deal - even if the deal was going to head into the toilet - and play down the "money and the babes" aspect.

The actor even turned author with a primer on making the deal with Dear Salmoneous, The World's First Guide to Love and Money.

To develop Salmoneous, Trebor drew on a number of influences including a stint as a telemarketer while he was living in New York City.

There, he sold management seminars to mid-level managers. It was a task which forced him to engage the prospective client and actually sell them on the product rather than read from a script as most telemarketers do.

"With a little knowledge I go from the brochure, I could schmooze, extrapolate and hold the person's attention," he recalled.

"So, I developed that talent ... the art of the deal ... at that job.

"And I tapped into that talent for Salmoneus ... learning how to engage the other characters and hold their attention."

Trebor's 14 years in New York provided him with an opportunity to watch salesmen, actors and a host of other characters in relative anonymity.

"As an actor, you have to be a sponge," Trebor said.

"I'm not the guy who has a notebook of gestures that I've seen, but I have a fairly retentive memory and I can use stuff I've seen and filter it through when I need it."

Elements of Salmoneus can be seen in Trebor's seven-minute stint as a tuxedo salesman in Making Mr. Right with John Malkovich - something Trebor was unaware of until film critic Roger Ebert pointed it out.

Despite his numerous roles on television and in movies, Trebor longs to return to his roots in theatres - even if it is just for a little while.

"In some ways if you see a stage performance ... far fewer people see it than see it on TV or movie, but it will make a stronger impression

Continued on page 100

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Leave me with one eye, pleads actor

To get the part of Martok, J.G. Hertzler left blood on people. Then he left his mark on the role

Thirteen turned out to be a charm for J.G. Hertzler.

The Georgia-born actor had auditioned 12 times for various roles on Star Trek: The Next Generation and Deep Space Nine including Gul Dukat with no success.

"Marc Alaimo just nailed the hell out of it," Hertzler said of the audition for the Cardassian heavy.

On try number 13, he was selected for the role of a Vulcan starship captain in the pilot episode of Star Trek: Deep Space Nine. And it was all thanks to the captain of the Enterprise.

Hertzler took part in Patrick Stewart's weekend acting workshops. During that time, Stewart kept floating Hertzler's name to the casting directors. With the constant rejections, the process of meeting casting directors became a routine.

"It was just like Ralph and George, the wolf and the sheepdog in the Warner Brothers cartoons. I'd go in and they'd say 'Hello Ralph, how ya doing',"" he recalled. "I'd do something and then I'd go away.

"I told my agent, 'don't send me to Star Trek anymore, please. I've got no more tricks in my bag'."

But Hertzler and his agent forgot to tell the folks at Star Trek.

After his turn in the Emissary, he received a call from casting director Ron Surma. Surma wanted to see if Hertzler was interested in the character of General Martok for a two-episode gig — The Way of the Warrior — even though one of Hertzler's friends was 99-percent cast in the role. It took some extra effort, but Hertzler ripped the part away and a little bit more.

"I read for the part, I threw a chair and stuck it into the wall, tore my thumbnail off and got blood on people," Hertzler recalls. "I guess it was the blood that sealed the deal.

"It was just a fortuitous thing that I happened to bring something that was good for Martok and good for Worf."

The two-episode commitment became 30 spread over a period of five seasons. And the character moved from a general to chancellor for the Empire.

And, naturally, during that time, the character grew and evolved from just another Klingon into the leader of the empire and, equally important, into a fan favourite.

It's the same, Hertzler says, of any character on a regular series.

"The first year, the characters are sort of there. By the second season, the characters are there. They're fleshed out, they've grown and they've become real entities," Hertzler explained.

Over the course of five seasons, the actor imbued Martok with more of his own persona and mannerisms. The task was aided by the writers who began to tailor scripts to Hertzler as they became more familiar with the actor.

"When you work on something over that period of time, something happens," he said. "You begin to put more of your self into the role and the writers begin putting more of your traits into the character."

Adding to the appeal of the character, said Hertzler, was the fact Martok was disabled due to the loss of his left eye and still pressed on with his duty. (It would have been even more challenging for the actor had his right eye

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been covered with prosthetics — Hertzler has had vision problems with his left eye since birth, so he would have been working blind).

Originally, the producers wanted to repair the eye when the character returned from the Jem'Hadar prison planet. It was a move which Hertzler lobbied against.

Ira (Steven Behr) said 'Don't worry about the eye, with 24th century technology, we can repair it'," Hertzler explained. "I said, 'Ira no, let me keep the eye, then it will be just me and Christopher Plummer'."

"I said, 'Ira no, let me keep the eye, then it will be just me and Christopher Plummer'."

—J.G Hertzler on Martok's vision

Hertzler, and Plummer also share a background in Shakespeare. Hertzler has more than 50 Shakespeare productions to his credit. This background, as it does for other actors playing alien roles on the series, proved to be handy. Hertzler pulled from a number of Shakespearean characters to bring Martok to life.

"I was able to bring to bear everything I learned in about 25 years in the business," he explained.

"I could borrow from the Scottish king in MacBeth, I could borrow from Hastings, I could borrow from Oberon ... Theseus ... all the parts that I have played in Shakespeare.

"That was a gift."

Being able to draw on such figures in the theatre is something Star Trek producers look for in a good alien, explained Hertzler.

"Star Trek uses more Shakespearean and classically trained actors that any other television show," he said, quickly noting that Stewart is the most obvious example and exception to this trend. "Usually, it's for the aliens because they want them to have a heightened standard of speech which is slightly different than the Rikeresque approach to language which is a little more American ... a little more easy."

Hertzler's long career on the stage also meant that he was well-prepared for the linguistic demands of playing Martok, in fact, he has to work hard to avoid using formal pronunciation in other roles.

"I usually have to work consciously to mess up my voice to make it believeable in a contemporary piece."

But besides the larger than life presence of the character, Martok also carried a sense of commonality that clicked with fans of the series.

"The producers said I brought a blue-collar quality to Martok," he said. "I don't know if that was something they were looking for in the beginning or if it was something that developed.

"It was more of a General George S. Patton than a Field Marshal Bernard Montgomery."

Fox brings Tick to primetime

As if The Weber Show didn't have enough going against it. Now it must battle the hero who is nigh invincible.

Fox has announced that it will slot The Tick! in its 8:30 p.m. Thursday slot.

The series, featuring Patrick Warburton (Seinfeld and News Radio) as the big blue defender, takes place in the city known as The City.

There the forces of good are hip-deep in evil.

Armed only with his nigh invulnerability, this big blue defender of all that is right patrols The City's rooftops. At the Tick's side is Arthur, an accountant who scorned the fuzzy security blanket of Corporate America to pursue his destiny.

With them on their heroic exploits is Captain Liberty a patriotic superperson whose light from her torch of righteousness sends the roaches of wrong scurrying back to their dank, filthy crevices and the suave Bat Manuel, whose Latin charm is as big as his wingspan.

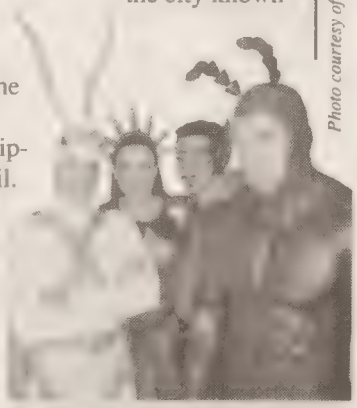


Photo courtesy of 20th Century Fox

The Tick (Patrick Warburton, Right) and his heroic superhero friends Arthur (David Burke), Captain Liberty (Liz Vassey) and Bat Manuel (Nestor Carbonell).

To flesh out his character, Hertzler borrowed from the Scottish king in MacBeth, from Hastings and from Oberon.

Lexx's canibal keeps feasting on roles

As Giggerotta, Ellen Dubin sported an 18-foot tongue, as Queen she bathed in a .. you wouldn't believe us and for the next season of Lexx anything is possible

There was a moment on a small stage in the northern reaches of Canada when Ellen Dubin decided it was time to become an actress.

About a decade ago, Dubin was in the midst of a six-week run as Josie Hogan in Eugene O'Neil's A Moon for the Misbegotten. It was a demanding role which required her to be on stage for most of the performance.

"It was the play that made me into the actress I am today," she said during a recent interview from Los Angeles. "I was just floundering around as an actress until I got that role.

"It was my first major role, it was the most compelling work I had been in and I just connected with the audience."

Since then, Dubin has carved out a niche for herself in theatre, movies and primarily in television.

The Toronto-based actress has appeared in such movies as Tammy and the T-Rex, Alone with a Stranger and Abraxas, Guardian of the Universe, as well as on series such as Relic Hunter, Earth: Final Conflict and Highlander: The Raven.

But it was as the cannibal, Giggerota the Wicked, and as the lunatic Queen on Lexx that has given Dubin cult stature.

Until A Moon For the Misbegotten, Dubin was just someone who had gotten into the performing arts because of her bad posture, lack of confidence and bad feet.

As a child, Dubin studied ballet because her mother believed it would improve her posture and strengthen her feet. One of her teachers noted that she was a good dancer, but she was a better actor.

"I always had to have that one extra moment," she recalls. "It always had to take me longer to die than anyone else."

Still, Dubin managed to combine her dance training and her acting chops to fulfil one of her dreams by performing in the Canadian national production of A Chorus Line. Her dance training also comes in handy when she tackles the physical roles that have become her forte.

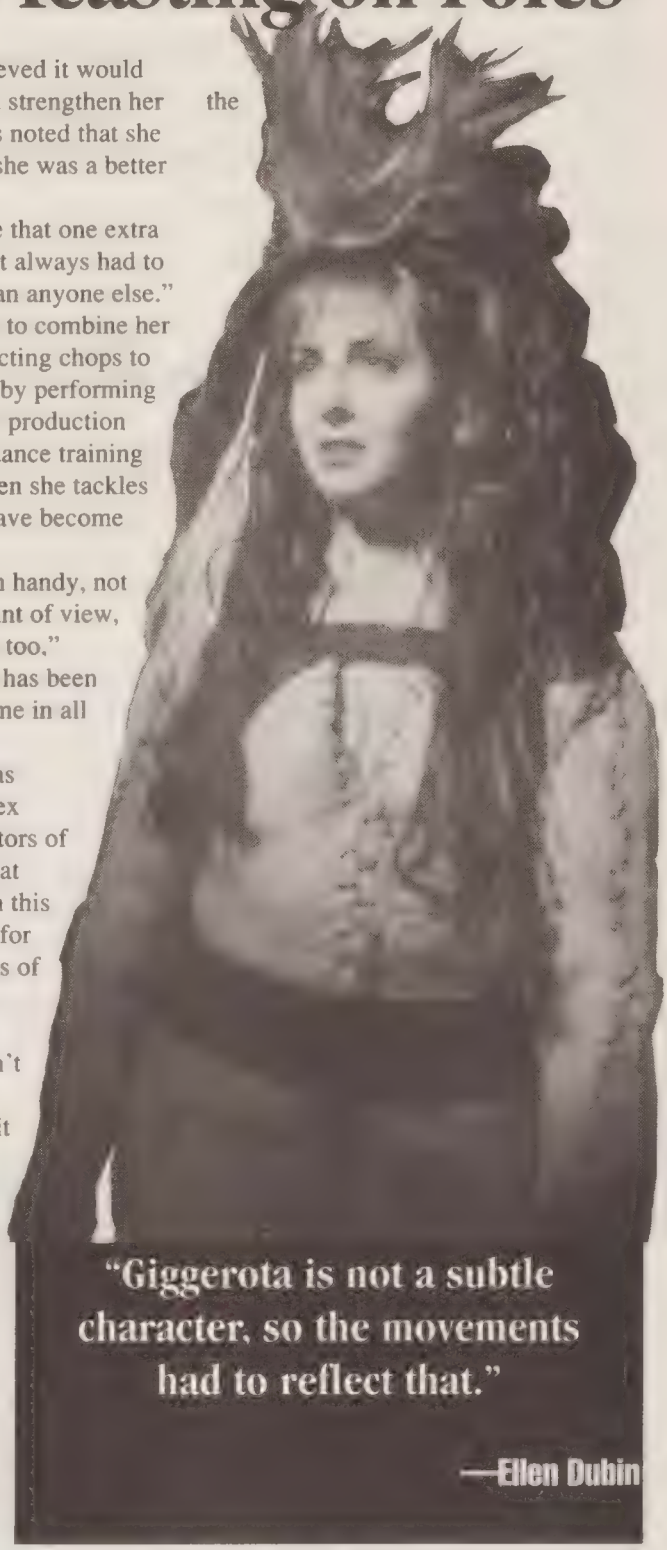
"The training came in handy, not only from a physical point of view, but from an internal one too," Dubin explains. "Dance has been extremely important to me in all the parts I play."

One of those roles was Giggerota (named for Lex Gigeroff one of the creators of Lexx, but also a word that means "Liver Eater"). In this case, Dubin had to look for ways to remove elements of grace from Giggerota's movements.

"As a cannibal, I didn't think she would be too graceful, so I discussed it with Paul Donovan (series' producer) and we came up with the concept of her wearing boots," she explained. "Boots make you stomp more as opposed to flittering.

"She's a very earth-bound character."

Adding to this sense, was the heavy costume which the character wore. The coat, supposedly made of the skin of one her victims (his face is on the back) and which is accented by heavy



"Giggerota is not a subtle character, so the movements had to reflect that."

—Ellen Dubin

stitches to mimic autopsy sutcher.

"Giggerota is not a subtle character, so the movements had to reflect that."

Giggerota, who was one of the prisoners freed during the first movie, figured prominently in the second of the movies, Super Nova. Eventually, the character and her 18-foot tongue were killed.

After Giggerotta's departure, Dubin returned to the series as Queen in the episode Girls Town.

In the episode, the producers reincarnated the souls of their favourite characters and placed them into different bodies.

"It has never been done on a science fiction series," Dubin says with a measure of pride. "They wanted us to have some of the same qualities."

So, Dubin brought the demanding, aggressive nature and the sexual innuendo which were part of Giggerota to Queen and added something else to the mix.

"Queen was a little wacky, she was really quite disturbed."

To create the character, Dubin drew inspiration from Lady MacBeth, Desdemona and "Ophelia from Hamlet on acid.

"We really do our homework on this series and then throw it out."

For the role, Dubin had to endure sitting submerged in a tub of water for 14-

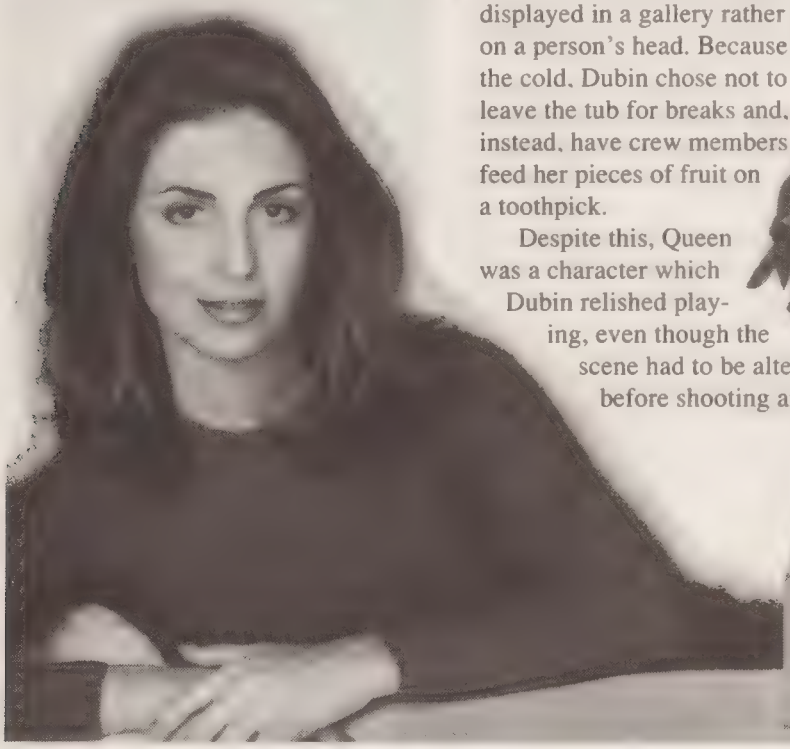
Ellen Dubin has appeared in a number of Canadian-based sci-fi productions including Gene Roddenberry's Earth: Final Conflict (below) and Highlander: The Raven. There she relished the chance for some sword play. Below left: Dubin sports something a little more conventional than the skins of her victims as she did in the first season of Lexx.

hours a day over several days. The set was a World War II bunker in Berlin which, while it may have presented the feeling the producers were looking for, it was miserable for the actors.

"It was cold, damp and miserable."

Adding to her misery was a headpiece that was designed to be displayed in a gallery rather than on a person's head. Because of the cold, Dubin chose not to leave the tub for breaks and, instead, have crew members feed her pieces of fruit on a toothpick.

Despite this, Queen was a character which Dubin relished playing, even though the scene had to be altered before shooting and



one of the episode's undertones was lost.

In the finished work, Stanley Tweedle is in a cage, imprisoned by Queen. Originally, it was supposed to be Xev in the cage. But Zenia Seaburg took ill and the switch had to be made.

This meant that the meaning of Queen's statement "I want your body" lost something in the translation.

"There was supposed to be lesbian undertones to it or whatever the audience chose to see," Dubin explained. "It still works, but it did lose that double layer of meaning."

Even with her numerous appearances on Lexx, Dubin's relationship with the series may have been quite difference had it not been for the way in which the series was financed during its early days. Lexx, or Tales From a Parallel Universe, as it was known then, was a Canadian-German co-production. Because of this, efforts were made to have the female lead filled by a German actress For the initial movies and the first season, the role of Zev was filled by Eva Habermann.

Dubin was one of the actresses who auditioned for the role of the sexually unquenchable character.

"It was a very bare script, they gave us very little and I actually panicked because I thought 'what am I going to do to make these words jump off the page and make them hire me." she said. "It was very bizarre, I couldn't get through the first script. It was nonlinear ... which was kind of fascinating.

"Usually, the script goes from A to B to C to D and finishes at Z. This script was A, Z, O, P and Q. It was all over the place."

Of course, for a series that revels in portraying an exciting and chaotic universe, you should expect no less during the auditions and casting phase.

Even after telling the producers she couldn't make heads or tails of the script - to no avail, Dubin pressed on. Her audition consisted of her lying on the floor and portraying Zev as she was having a dream.

It didn't get her the part, but it did get her noticed. She was called back in to audition for another character - which was still sketchy at the time, but which turned out to be Gigerotta.

"One of the things that attracted me to Lexx in the first place was its esoteric nature. It was challenging and I like a good challenge," she said. "And the women who were written were very strong and powerful. That's very rare in television.

"How many times can a

Continued on page 100

As the Queen , Ellen Dubin got to sit in a vat of water for 14 hours. It took awhile before she realized what the vat looked like from above

McFarlane regains control of Spawn, sequel back on track for 2002

Initial submissions for awaited sequel featuremove from fantasy to urban-thriller vein

Sweating palms, as much as box office receipts will be the sign of success when the second Spawn movie reaches theatres.

After being idled by one studio, McFarlane reclaimed the rights to his creation earlier this year and quickly inked a deal with another studio. As a result, expect the second Spawn movie to reach theatres mid- to late 2002.

By McFarlane's reckoning about six movies are made each year which were once the property of another studio that lost interest in the project and bailed on it.

"Then someone else gets enthused about it and it gets made," he notes

In the case of the second Spawn movie, the rights for the project reverted back to McFarlane. He then "shopped it on the street" and pulled interest from three studios before settling on Columbia Pictures

"I did what anyone else would do and looked for someone who was excited about it," McFarlane explained. "In the big picture, you have someone who is now enthused about it instead of someone just sitting on it.

"Your new suitors, in this case Columbia, buy it because they are like, 'Yeah, we like it, we like the franchise, we like what you've done with your career ... blah, blah, blah ... we can do it as long as we can keep a reasonable budget on it'," McFarlane said. "I sort of gave them an overview of the movie and how I wanted to reinvent it and they went, 'cool!'"

Still, money is the key - or, as McFarlane notes, achieving a budget that becomes a no-brainer for the studio.

"Your goal, besides giving them a story that they sort of fall in love with is to give them a budget they can live with," he said. "That's half the battle."

McFarlane estimates that the project, not counting talent-related costs, will carry a pricetag of $25 million. The price jumps considerably if the studio opts to put "some heavy star power" in front of the camera.

Adding star power, McFarlane explains, would put the movie in the neighbourhood of the first movie (about $60 million).

What brings the cost down for the second movie is its thematic departure from the first movie.

"One things that cost us a lot in the first film is that we used a lot of special effects," he said. "The movie isn't that kind of movie on the second go-round.

"It's more of an urban thriller, suspense movie that's actually quite real so all of the fantasy, comic-book elements are going to go to the wayside and we're going to completely start from scratch."

Retooling

The dramatic change of pace from the first movie isn't so dramatic according to McFarlane. In fact, it is the direction which he had wanted to go in the first place.

"The first movie and some of the

"If you don't continue to grow your franchise and grow it up as your audience grows up, then it's too easy to lose them."

Expect Sam and Twitch to play a more prominent role in the second Spawn movie

things that I've done with the character are sort of stepping stones or primers for people to get into it," he said "Everything is sort of a calculated risk to build an audience then we need to upgrade it in terms of sophistication."

But McFarlane is also the first to admit that had the first movie been a blockbuster, the second movie would have been out by now and it would have mirrored the first.

"Because the studio isn't going to mess with the look and feel of money," McFarlane notes.

"The upside was that the first movie was a moderate success, so there's room to sell them on what I consider a bit of an upgrade," he said.

One of the basic reasons for the upgrade is that the audience that attended the first movie is now older and their interests have matured.

"Five years later, if you're going to make a sequel all those people are old enough to go to R movies," McFarlane explained. "I don't think you're going to lose too much of the audience — because as soon as you go from PG to R, you instantly lose part of the audience.

"But if the vast majority of the people who went to the first movie were 13 or 14, now they're going to be, at minimum 18 so they can go to it."

A R rating, he adds, didn't hurt The Matrix, Gladiator or Sleepy Hollow at the box office. In fact, maturing up the Spawn franchise is necessary if the movie franchise is to have a long-term future."

This means that rather than play up the fantasy elements, the movie will be a suspense thriller with a hint of horror — the only consistent aspect to of the movies would be the name of the character.

"If you don't continue to grow your franchise and grow it up as your audience grows up, then it's too easy to lose them," McFarlane said. "I always want to get the audience into adult land and make intelligent sophisticated versions of Spawn.

"This way if you hook them at 18, then you have them until they are 68."

By continually aiming at a younger demographic, McFarlane notes, filmmakers would have to rebuild the audience every seven or eight years rather than evolve the movie and its characters with them.

"My instincts have always been go for the 50-year thing. So now I have to scare the shit out of them."

After inking a deal with Columbia, McFarlane was asked to take another pass at the story.

Once OK'd by studio executives, McFarlane was to sit down and begin work on the screenplay - which, barring major delays, should be ready for approval by the end of the year. But he said fans of Spawn should expect to see Sam and Twitch on the screen for a good chunk of the movie.

"But it's pretty cut and dried so it will be a quick shoot."

☆

Monster Club unveils guide to horror

Horror movie junkie, Cheryl Duran, web master of **www.themonsterclub.com** and co-executive producer of the new feature film "Stop It, You're Killing Me" offers an informative and fun book about the best of the horror film genre, from the early days of horror movies to today's own classics.

The Monster Club.Com Guide To Horror (Jona Books) offers the history of horror posters, comics, magazines, vintage horror radio, horror hosts, monster toys plus 100 best horror movie synopsis/reviews, top TV show reviews, a look at favourite anthology films, as well as biographies of film makers and stars.

Durn wrote the book for fans who love classic horror movies and facts about favorite films, shows, stars and more.

It also features a foreword by Ben Chapman, The "REEL" Creature from "The Creature From The Black Lagoon"

The Monster Club.Com Guide To Horror by Cheryl Duran is available for purchase as of June 1 at **Amazon.com** or at book stores.

Book sellers and stores can obtain the book through Ingram wholesale distributors.

New entries in Lodoss saga here

Creator Ryo Mizuno promises fans will like Rune Soldier

by
Derwin Mak

Ryo Mizuno's Lodoss Wars tales have taken various forms including the 1996 movie The Legend of Crystania

Ryo Mizuno is the author and creator of the Lodoss Wars, an anime franchise based on stories similar to Dungeons and Dragons: TV series, OAV video series, manga, CD radio dramas, novels and games.

He also wrote The Legend of Crystania (1996), an anime movie set after the Lodoss Wars. His Legends of Lodoss novels were adapted as the Lady of Pharis manga series. His most recently released work is the novel Record of the Lodoss Wars: The Grey Witch and its manga adaptation; The Grey Witch is actually the first novel and Lodoss Wars story he ever wrote, but it has been published only now.

The Grey Witch has also been adapted as an OAV series.

Mizuno's career has consisted solely of the Lodoss Wars saga, but he hints that he may be moving to other projects. "I don't have a lot of plans to expand the Lodoss series," he says. "In Japan, the Lodoss saga is finished. I'm starting a new series of novels and manga called Rune Soldier, which will be out this spring."

"My influences were Tolkien and Michael Moorcock," he says, when asked which authors have influenced his writing.

"I also read a lot of fantasy in high school. None of it was Japanese, though, because Japan has no market for its own fantasy. I read mostly U.S. and British novels. I'm also interested in fairy tales from Europe.

"I was also highly influenced by Neon Genesis Evangelion. It was strange."

As for what is popular with Japanese science fiction fans now, he says, "Cyberpunk is relatively new in Japan, so the cyberpunk theme is not very widely used in anime, but it is popular; The Matrix, staring Keanu Reeves, is very popular. It was like a live-action anime."

Unfortunately, Japanese science fiction publishing is in a slump.

"Most science fiction published are foreign translations. The majority of Japanese science fiction novels are

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Bandai releases Big O on DVD

Bandai Entertainment is scheduled to release the DVD version of the anime series, The Big O Volume 1, on June 19. It's a series that Kidscreen called The Big O, "Batman the Animated Series Meets James Bond."

Director Kazuyoshi Katayama combines anime with the style and look of the Old West.

In The Big O, the mysterious "The Event" has caused the residents of Paradigm City to lose their memories. The city, has since recovered—but under police rule, its citizens are forever questioning what happened to them, so long ago.

- ☆ **Produced by Bandai America**
- ☆ **Running Time: Approx 100 min.**
- ☆ **Rating: 13up**
- ☆ **DVD bilingual SRP: $24.98 (US)**

TheDVD release features animated interactive menus, a bilingual language track (English/Japanese), English subtitles, trailers, textless openings, creator commentary and staff interviews.

ADV Films taps Nadia: Secret of Blue Water

ADV Films is scheduled to release the video and DVD version of Nadia: Secret of Blue Water: The Adventure Begins on June 19.

Inspired by Jules Verne's masterpiece 20,000 Leagues Under the Sea, the story takes place at the 1889 World's Fair in Paris. There, a young inventor crosses paths with an enigmatic girl and her pet lion. Suddenly they find themselves pursued by a villainous trio intent upon stealing the magical Blue Water. Nadia and Jean travel in search of Nadia's homeland and her past, their only clue the mysterious jewel Nadia wears.

- ☆ **Produced by ADV Films**
- ☆ **Running Time: Approx 100 min.**
- ☆ **Rating: 12+**
- ☆ **VHS Dub SRP: $19.98 (US)**
- ☆ **DVD bilingual SRP: $29.98 (US)**

anime tie-ins."

Japanese publishing has a symbiotic relationship with the TV industry.

"A popular TV series will be adapted into a novel series, but the reverse happens too. A popular novel series will become an anime series. Both Lodoss Wars and Slayers were originally novels."

However, don't expect original novels to explore themes and issues that TV won't: "Authors try to be in synch with the anime industry. In other words, they write their novels to be like anime series, hoping that anime companies will want to adapt them as TV shows."

Indeed, if one looks at his body of work, it's all Lodoss Wars novels and spin-offs, written like anime and gaming-style adventures.

He is primarily a writer, not an artist or animator.

"The production of anime is usually separate from the writing. The animators control the anime and create original characters that aren't in the original novel."

But as creator and owner of the franchise, he later incorporates anime characters into subsequent novels.

Alas, he doesn't have much advice for would-be writers.

"Just type into a computer," he says.

"Working isn't a very pleasurable experience," he admits. "What I like is the thinking process. After brainstorming, I have to write, which is tough. But after working 10 hours, I really start liking it. I get a 'writer's high'."

Mizuno still plays roleplaying games. His favourites are Room Quest, Shadow Realm, and Dungeons and Dragons. He also designs and creates RPGs. He designed and created Sword World, an independently-produced RPG in Japan.

"I am also very involved in the development of the Lodoss Wars computer games," he says. "I wrote the Lodoss Wars game."

Mizuno gives his thoughts on the development of anime: "I grew up with Gundam in the '70s, in high school. Gundam was the first anime series that was aimed at teens and adults instead of children. Now it's normal to aim anime at adults.

"Gundam is about war. It was very meaningful and the characters were so

"I grew up with Gundam in the '70s, in high school. Gundam was the first anime series that was aimed at teens and adults instead of children. Now it's normal to aim anime at adults.

real. Gundam did well with its age group, so anime companies continued to make mature anime. A new Gundam generation arose and went on to make anime, making shows that a broad range of ages will like."

He is surprised by what anime is popular in North America.

"There are some works that do well in Japan, but not overseas and vice versa. It depends on the audience and how they take the series. I'm quite surprised that Fushigi Yugi is popular here. Ghost In the Shell was not popular in Japan, but it seems popular in North America."

Finally, he tells us what he considers to be his proudest work.

"It's The Legends of Lodoss novel series, the prequel to Record of the Lodoss Wars. The Legends of Lodoss has more demon gods fighting humans. The Legends of Lodoss has not been released in North America yet. The comic-book version is out as Lady of Pharis."

☆

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Bubblegum Crisis offers series' highs, lows

AnimEigo's stellar boxed set provides fans with chance to savour mystery and for reviewers to rethink past critiques

By
Emru Townsend

Every creative type, from the director to the painter to the photographer, has an early work that embarrasses them.

This even applies to animation reviewers: In a 1992 review of Bubblegum Crisis, I described the character Priss Asagiri's signature song, "Konya wa Hurricane," as "searing."

It's actually pretty good for Japanese pop, but it's still a few degrees short of searing. I generally plead fanboy enthusiasm in my defense, but after re-watching the first episode opener on AnimEigo's stellar Bubblegum Crisis DVD boxed set, I can at least say that said enthusiasm wasn't completely misguided.

I consider the cyberpunk-tinged Bubblegum Crisis to be the first OAV series to successfully apply the music video aesthetic to anime, with quick-cutting visuals and every dramatic or action scene accompanied by a rock/pop/electronic score or song.

It's a formula that is now familiar to anyone who catches summer films at the local cineplex, but watching Priss's "Hurricane" performance intercut with action-packed scenes on the streets of a futuristic Tokyo back in 1987 was something to experience.

Despite the evolution of music-video styles and the rise of electronica and ambient music as suitable film score material, Bubblegum Crisis's aural style still holds up pretty well.

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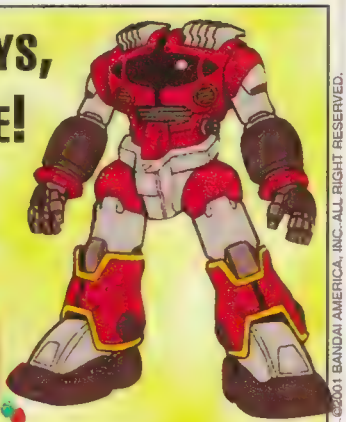

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The Bubblegum Crisis 2032 set includes two Hurricane Live concert/music videos which are in keeping with the series' quick-cutting style. Opposit page, the Knight Sabers — four female mercenaries who generally find themselves at odds with rogue Boomers, the cyberdroids manufactured by multinational mega-corporation, Genom.

So, too, do the visuals and the story. Set in 2032, a few years after a massive earthquake devastates Tokyo, the series follows the adventures of the Knight Sabers in the reborn MegaTokyo.

The Knight Sabers are four female mercenaries who generally find themselves at odds with rogue Boomers, the cyberdroids manufactured by multinational mega-corporation, Genom. Initially created to speed up rebuilding efforts after the quake, Boomers come in all shapes and sizes, from towering monsters to those indistinguishable from humans.

The Advanced Defense Police have been formed to deal with rogue Boomers, but are for the most part outmatched, suffering high casualties in just about every scene they're in. On the other hand, the Knight Sabers' weapon of choice-aside from sass-is the hard suit, a form of powered armor loaded with individualized, customized weaponry, and it serves them well.

All the elements are in place for a kick-ass series, and Bubblegum Crisis generally delivers. It's also something of a treat to watch all eight episodes back to back, plus the two Hurricane Live concert/music video features included in the boxed set.

Originally released over the course of several years, Bubblegum Crisis slowly unfolded, with little clues and hints dropped here and there. Remarkably, although just about every episode tied into a previous episode in some way, they also stood just fine on their own.

But watching all the episodes together also highlights the series' weak points.

Sylia Stingray and Priss, as group leader and spiritual anchor of the Knight Sabers respectively, naturally command the lead roles-especially since the two are settling old scores against Genom and to some degree the AD Police through their Knight Saber activities.

But this comes at the expense of the other half of the team, Nene Romanova and Linna Yamazaki. Nene, an AD Police officer, at least provides inside ADP information and serves as the group's communications maven, but aside from her starring role in the very funny eighth episode (which shows that her perennial high spirits should not be equated with ditziness), she's only slightly more fleshed out than Linna, about whom we know nothing save that she's an aerobics instructor and a friend of a character who is murdered in the second episode (which, naturally, has further repercussions later).

She almost completely

Continued on page 55

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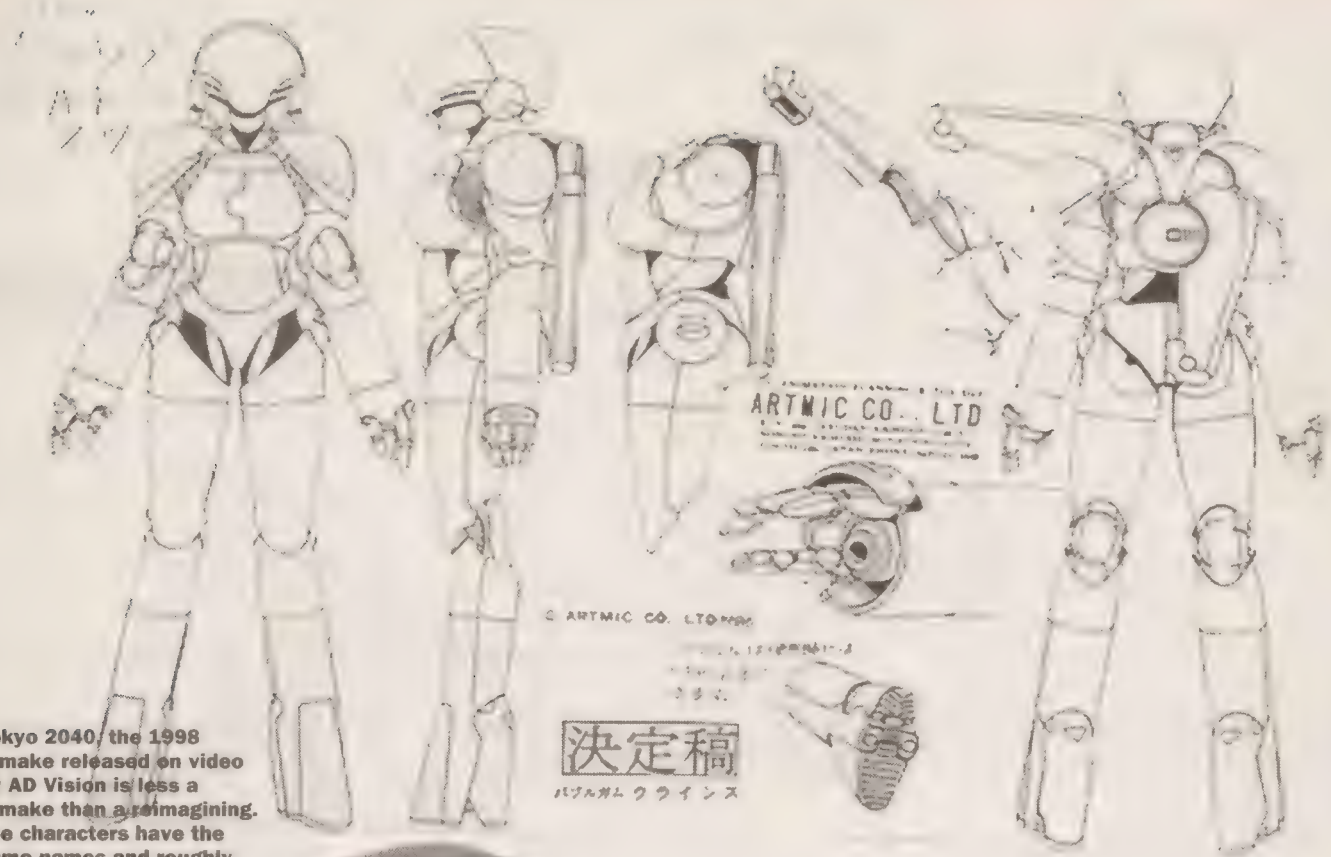


Tokyo 2040, the 1998 remake released on video by AD Vision is less a remake than a reimagining. The characters have the same names and roughly the same relationships to each other, but everything else is fair game.

fades into the background, which is a shame in any kind of team show. We also never really get an understanding of Nene and Linna's motivations for taking on this dangerous lifestyle.

At least everyone gets equal screen time in Bubblegum Crisis Tokyo 2040, the 1998 television remake released to video here by AD Vision. Actually, it's less a remake than a reimagining; characters have the same names and roughly the same relationships to each other, but everything else is fair game. The Knight Sabers, for instance, are now in opposition to the police, and their existence is hushed up through Genom's influence on the media. As if to make up for Linna's cardboard character in the original series, here she's the main focus: the Knight Sabers exist prior to her arrival in Megalo (again, the post-quake Tokyo), and she ends up falling in with them. In some ways, though, she's still a cipher: while her desire to help people fits in with her character, one still has to wonder about her chosen method of doing so-at least, based on the twelve episodes I've seen to date.

As the original Bubblegum Crisis is considered a classic of SF anime, people will naturally be polarized on some of

from page 55

the changes made. Personally, I'm not overly fond of the new Sylia Stingray.

In both versions, she is the Batman to the others' Robins: using her financial and technological resources, she gathers these three women to engage in her vendetta. I liked the old Sylia because she exuded a certain level of grace and good humor in her civilian life, but was hard as nails and cool as ice when it came to Knight Sabers business. She has the same level of dedication in Tokyo 2040, but is more prone to emotional outbursts and questionable judgment calls. It's one of those things that makes you realize how carefully the creators maintained a balance between the Knight Sabers' characters in the original series, which made them believable as a team. In Tokyo 2040 you end up asking yourself how they've survived for so long.

The music, too, has been updated, with more of an industrial/rock feel that stands up better on its own. There's still some very competent Japanese pop, but it doesn't dominate the series as it did the original. On the other hand, given that the Bubblegum Crisis series is known for its wedding of music to story, it's surprising that, at times, the soundtrack is applied rather carelessly to the visuals.

The percussive rhythms accompanying Linna's first assault on a Boomer shouldn't be the same as those playing when Genom honcho Brian J. Mason is giving orders to his employees, furthering his hidden agenda.

Ultimately, it's still Bubblegum Crisis, which has proven to be very adaptable over the years (there have been three other spin-off series) while retaining its core elements and therefore its appeal. Old-time Crisis fans would do well to check out Tokyo 2040; Tokyo 2040 fans should look at the original to see where it all came from.

Emru Townsend only stops talking about animation long enough to write about it. Visit his website at http://purpleplanetmedia.com

Twilight master is masterful

By Miki Okamoto

New stuff

Twilight of the Dark Master **(Urban Vision)** is one of those rare releases that actually lives up to its billing.

It's a collector's edition in every sense of the of the term.

The DVD offers such extras as video footage of the artistic team at work, an artwork gallery, trailers and a web connect feature.

The movie is visually stunning, although a tad dark for my screen so I couldn't make out all of the action. Of course, that just enhances the darkness of the story.

At only 50 minutes in length, it is relatively fast-paced. Opening with the bloody death of a woman, the Twilight of the Dark Master follows the collision course between the Demons and the Guardians — bitter enemies from the Earth's ancient past.

In Neo-Shinjuku City, the remnants of the two groups await the other. The Demons inhabit the city's underworld, while the Guardians live among the human dwellers in the city.

The Demons, naturally enough, turn out to be masters of duplicity. They turn on their servants/partners and destroy whatever/whoever they please.

Duane Dell Amico and Tatsuhiko Urahata have penned a compelling story which is accentuated by the able direction of Akiyuki Shimbo.

Rated mature audiences. Contains violence, nudity and adult situations; English Dubbed and English Subtitled.

☆☆☆

With Dual **(Pioneer)** viewers are treated to a modest tale, which follows a well-worn path of battling sides and star-crossed lovers...etc...etc.

The latest DVD release contains episodes eight, nine and 10 — Mitsuki, Escape and Repatriate, respectively.

In these episodes, Kazuki finds himself in the clutches of Miss Rah — although she doesn't seem like the enemy. Something is amiss ... has he been lied to by his colleagues? Could he be in some sort of parallel world? Is it part of a diabolical plot? Will he ever return home?

Sadly, the story underpinning dual is too weak to support what is pretty strong animation. This is partly because the story arc thus far rings far too familiar and trite.

Which is too bad, because I really wanted to like this release.

Addendum: I have to admit, I tried the recipe for Egg Rolls ala Rara that's included with the DVD and loved it. It makes a great snack during the movie.

Rated 13 and up. Contains character puzzlement, women in uniforms-slash-barhopping wear; Bilingual — English/Japanese and English Subtitled. Running time: 75 minutes.

☆☆☆

Golgo 13 **(Urban Vision)** can be summed up in one word ... "wow!"

This is one beautiful piece of work.

In this adventure, assassin Golgo 13, must eliminate the leader of a South American liberation army — the deadly Queen Bee — before she can assassinate a presidential candidate.

What starts as just a run-of-the-mill assassination becomes much larger as Golgo discovers the secrets of Queen Bee's past and her ties to her target. These revelations lead to a climax that is something straight out of the Manchurian Candidate and the eventual deaths of one of the assassins.

Sophisticated storytelling and superior artwork are the lynchpins for this DVD release. The disk also offers such goodies as commentary from the director and executive producer, trailers and English 5.1 or Japanese 5.1 with subtitles.

Rated mature audiences. Contains violence, nudity and adult situations; English and English Subtitled.

☆☆☆

Outlaw Star **(Bandai)** does viewers a lot of favours.

The company has released a two-DVD set featuring eight episodes — in this case, numbers 19 to 26. The first batch of episodes were released in an earlier DVS ... well, duh.

In this batch, the crew of the ship are mistaken for pirates by the militia that is maintaining order on the frontier, they seek to discover the origins of the bio-android Melfina on a planet that looks remarkably like Kobol from Battlestar Galactica and to learn the co-ordinates of the Galactic Leyline.

Since I missed the first series of episodes, it took me awhile to get a handle on what was going on ... but it was just a little while.

The artwork on Outlaw Star is pretty traditional stuff and plays pretty close to the vest — no sudden lapses into buffoonery. The writing is pretty crisp and the storyline interesting. The sole exception on this last point was Cats and Girls and Space Ships. I lost interest in that episode real fast.

Rated 13-up. Contains large spaceships, large talking reptilians in uniform and cyborgs and androids; Bilingual — English/Japanese and English Subtitled; Running time: 200 minutes.

☆☆☆

Wicked City **(Urban Vision)** is, pardon the pun, wicked.

In the movie, two agents of the Black Guards are responsible for getting a representative to a treaty signing ceremony between the Earth and the Black World. Naturally, renewing the long-standing pact is not what some residents of the other dimension want to see, so these demons try to assassinate the 200-plus year-old dirty old man.

But during the course of the battle, the female agent (a representative from the Black World is captured and her partner has to decide whether to save her or to fulfil his duty to protect the pain-in-the-ass placed in his protection.

In Wicked City, director Yoshiaki Kawajira and screenwriter Kisei Choo have put

Robotech: Macross Saga released by ADV Films

ADV Films will release Harmony Gold's Robotech The Macross Saga on DVD in June

Touted as the premiere collection of the original Robotech series, each DVD will contain six episodes of Robotech The Macross Saga: First Contact and Robotech The Macross Saga: Transformation.

In Robotech The Macross Saga: First Contact a mysterious battleship crashes onto Macross Island in the South Pacific, the future of mankind is changed forever.

Robotech The Macross Saga: Transformation features the survivors of Macross City and the crew of the SDF 1 as the ships arrives on Mars and sets up a new turn of deadly events.

☆ Produced by ADV Films

First Contact:

☆ Running Time: Approx 150 min.
☆ Rating: all ages
☆ DVD SRP: $14.98 (US)

TransformationL

☆ Running Time: Approx 150 min.
☆ Rating: all ages
☆ DVD SRP: $14.98 (US)

Robotech Legacy:

☆ Running Time: Approx 375 min.
☆ Rating: all ages
☆ DVD SRP: $44.98 (US)

Macross Saga 1: The Robotech Legacy includes both The Macross Saga: First Contact and Robotech The Macross Saga: Transformation, as well as also a special edition extras disc.

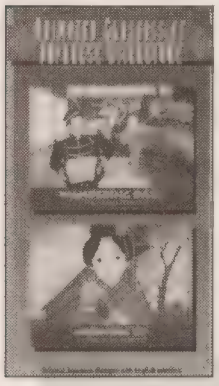
The bonus disc contains the English version of Codename: Robotech (75 min.), an audio commentary track by story editor Carl Macek and a number of production sketches.

The disc also include an international clip featuring French, Spanish, Italian and Portuguese audio tracks.

More Coming Releases

Central Park Media gives chance to wander

Central Park Media will release the classic Wandering Days/Growing up in July.



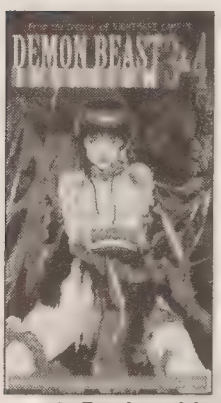
In the VHS release, Fumiko spends her days wondering if she'll ever become a writer as she continues her day-to-day existence peddling medicine.

In this segment, a rival gang has come between Shinnyo and Midori.

Now, Shinnyo must choose between his feelings for Midori and the acceptance of the group.

- ☆ **Produced by Central Park Media**
- ☆ **Running Time: Approx 52 min.**
- ☆ **Rating: All**
- ☆ **VHS Subtitled SRP: $19.99**

Demon Beasts, tentacles and all out in June



Anime 18 will release the latest effort from the creators of Venus 5 and La Blue Girl.

In Demon Beast's third and fourth installments, 19-year-old Kayo's demonic offspring lives and plots a diabolical family reunion. The Interplanetary Observation Agency dispatches a trio of beautiful female warriors to slay the invader. But they're way out of their league, and the demon

- ☆ **Produced by Central Park Media/Anime 18**
- ☆ **Running Time: Approx 90 min.**
- ☆ **Rating: 18-up**
- ☆ **VHS Dubbed SRP: $29.99**

together a wondrous and compelling story that is enhanced by the artwork created by Madhouse Studios.

The DVD also includes an interesting interview with Kawajiri that provides some insight and background into the creation of the movie.

Rated mature audiences. Contains violence, nudity, adult situations, bodies exploding and tentacles; Running time: English Dubbed and English Subtitled.

☆☆☆

With Amazing Nurse Nanako: The Last Spiral **(Pioneer)** viewers are confronted with a heroine that needs to take a tranquilizer ... a really large tranquilizer.

I can't do the story justice in such a limited amount of space, suffice to say it involves alien DNA, corrupt Vatican officials, mad scientists, government agendas and a really loud (and dumb) nurse.

While the story and the artwork are strong points for this DVD, you just want to be able to reach through the screen and slap the heroine — this is not a good thing.

The most recent release includes episodes 5 and 6 — the artwork involved in the battle in the secret lab in the second episode is particularly stellar.

Rated 16-up. Contains suggested nudity and a nasty alien; Running time: 60 minutes; Bilingual: English and Japanese and English Subtitled.

☆☆☆

BioHunter **(Urban Vision)** is a mindbending tour de force for director Yazo Sato and writer Kawajiri. In this DVD release, two molecular biology professors try to save humans who have been transformed into demons by a virus.

By attacking a human genetic code, the virus can add a mouth to a person's stomach (won't spoil the scene for you). Needless to say, it's a nasty bug.

Ironically, one biologist is infected but can contain the demon within him. Nice touch.

The artwork in this movie is superb and the action continues at breakneck speed.

Rated mature audiences. Contains violence, nudity, adult situations, mouths filled with razor-sharp teeth; English Dubbed and English Subtitled.

Also worth a mention:

☆☆☆

Bandai has released the two-disc, nine-episode Saber Marionette J on DVD.

Saber Marionette J is the story of world where the only women are emotionless androids, that is until Otaru finds three special Marionettes who can feel emotions. The three then fight to protect their world from an evil tyrant.

Strong artwork and an interesting story.

Rated 13-up. Contains nothing to get too alarmed over; Running time: 225 minutes; Trilingual: English, Japanese and Spanish, English subtitles.

☆☆☆

There aren't any surprises with Street Fighter Alpha: The Movie **(Manga Video)**.

Of course, it's still a good selection to have in your collection.

Not rated; Contains violence; Running time: 150 minutes; Bilingual: English and Japanese, English subtitles.

Audiences get something to Shrek about

Part of the challenge for Grignon and his team of animators was to make the action seem as real as possible even though the action was taking place in a fairy-tale world. It was a task made somewhat easier by new software that has been developed — but there were still some field trips for animators.

Rex Grignon likens his work on Shrek to that of a composer ... putting together distinct items to form a rich, textured work.

"In a sense you are creating this thing that, when completed will be unlike anything else so you can sit and watch it unfold and it's really satisfying," said Grignon who served as the supervising character animator on the computer-generated production scheduled for release May 18.

In this role, Grignon oversaw the department that "makes the characters come alive."

"Shrek is a good example of taking something that you couldn't do any other way and putting them together in this really fantastic world," he explained.

Grignon attended Queen's University in Kingston, Ont., before enrolling in Sheridan College's film production and technical animation programs — before the college gained its reputation in animation

"This was in the early '80s before computers made it into the classroom," Grignon recalls. "The next year, Sheridan actually started its computer program."

"I was just a tad early, but that's alright, it worked out fine for me."

Grignon received a presidential scholarship to work and study in the New York Institute of Technology's computer graphics laboratory. After leaving the program, Grignon began teaching stints in California before co-founding PDI's Character Animation Group in 1990. Early on Grignon was part of the creative team behind the Emmy Award-winning M&Ms: The Last Halloween special and the Muppet Vision 3-D and commercials featuring the Pillsbury Doughboy.

During a brief departure from PDI, Grignon served as a character animator on Toy Story. When he returned to PDI/Dreamworks, he took on the role of co-supervising animator on Antz.

With the start of production of Shrek almost two years ago, the Antz crew formed the foundation of the animation team for Shrek which totaled about 40.

Shrek, which turns the fairy tale world on its ear and gives it a good shaking, also

"The Donkey character is based on a real donkey who's been put under a spell so he can speak. His movements have to be grounded in the real world. So we did a lot of studying of four-legged hooved critters."

makes use of new technology that enhances the level of animation beyond what was present in previous computer-animated features such as Toy Story or Antz.

To create the characters and the world of Shrek, PDI animators used software produced skeletal and joint structure. On this foundation, layers of muscle and pads of fat were added and skin was attached. The final layer to be added by the animators was the clothing — since no one wants to watch a naked ogre.

The company's software allows the characters' clothing, rivers and trees to flow more realistically.

"There's fur and hair and fire throughout the film, it's a very organic world ," Grignon explained. "These are all very tricky for the computer to do and we pushed through all sorts of new territory on Shrek."

With the new territory mapped, PDI will take the technological advancements and use them as a basis for the next project, Tusker.

"We hope to do it better and better each time," Grignon said. "Each time out, we learn from the previous couple of years of production. So we're applying everything from Shrek and then some."

With Shrek, the quality of animation was essential to compliment the strong script and the presence of actors Mike Myers, Eddie Murphy and John Lithgow.

"The characters are quite realistic in the way they move," Grignon explained. "It's a fantasy film and its definitely animation, but there was a level of realism that we had to achieve and that was definitely a challenge for us."

During the development process, Grignon explained, animators were particularly challenged by Princess Fiona. The character's delicate features proved very tricky for the animators.

"There's a very narrow window of what we perceive as beautiful and elegant," he said. "And finding that was a little tricky with her.

"It's a little easier to animate an ogre stomping around or the donkey, because no one has ever seen either one of them ... a donkey talking or having eye twitches."

This is not to say that the animators didn't strive to achieve realism with the other characters that inhabit the fairy tale world of Shrek.

The animation team went into the field, literally, to study donkey.

"The Donkey character is based on a real donkey who's been put under a spell so he can speak," Grignon explained "His movements have to be grounded in the real world.

"So we did a lot of studying of four-legged hooved critters."

From this basis of reality, the animators exaggerate the movements and change the movements based on the requirements of a particular scene.

Unlike traditional animation, Grignon and his crew didn't try to match the facial expressions of Cameron Diaz or Lithgow to those of the princess or Lord Farquaad.

But the animators did have to match the vocal performance of the actors.

"Sometimes we will refer to the live action of the actor and see if we can draw some fun little expressions or nuances from them," Grignon explained. "But mostly, it comes from the directors' and animators' heads."

Still, animators look to the actors to provide what Grignon calls "nuggets."

"When you hear a line of dialogue, you can imagine it performed in a million different ways," he said. "You get these great actors and they'll add some little thing like a twitch of the eye, a smile or they'll shift their weight in a certain way and tell you really what that character is thinking.

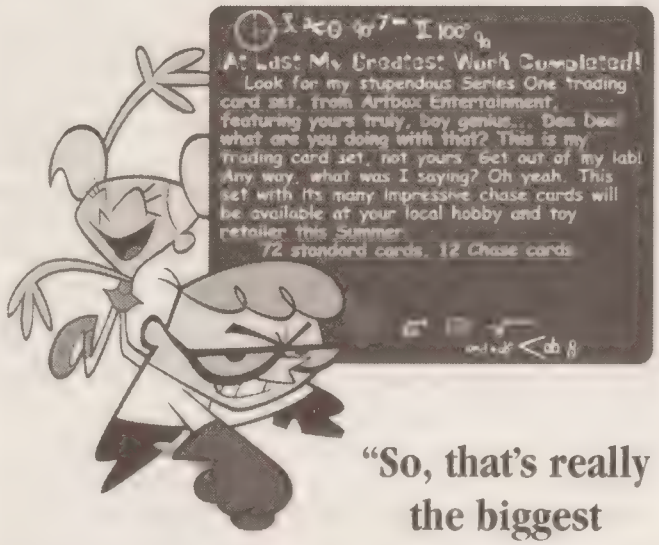
"That's what acting is all about, conveying what a character is thinking or feeling to an audience and that's what our animators do."

☆

Company thinks outside of the box

Propelled by Pokemon, Artbox is ready to ride a second wave with Dexter's Labratory and Powerpuff Girls

By
A. Jaye Williams


At Last My Greatest Work Completed!
Look for my stupendous Series One trading card set, from Artbox Entertainment, featuring yours truly, boy genius... Dee Dee! what are you doing with that? This is my trading card set, not yours. Get out of my lab! Any way, what was I saying? Oh yeah. This set with its many impressive chase cards will be available at your local hobby and toy retailer this Summer.
72 standard cards, 12 Chase cards

With the popularity of anime rising every year — whether seen on the big screen, small screen, or in comic books — the infectious quality and high energy that is akin to most anime has proven to be of great interest to millions of viewers around the world.

On television, who isn't aware of such ratings killers as Sailor Moon, Dragonball Z, and the biggest of the bunch, Pokemon?

Artbox Entertainment has been very aware.

Artbox produces collectible products including trading cards, stickers, temporary tatoos, film cards, motion cards, and other unique products.

Artbox Entertainment, a subsidiary of Amada Printing Manufacturing, is based in California and has been producing collectible cards and the like for about five years. The first set of trading cards that they put out was of a well-known comic book character.

"Lady Death, still a popular comic book, was the first non-sports card series and did very well," says Chris Rose, marketing director of Artbox.

Since those early days, he explains that over the years Artbox has grown immensely as it rode the Pokemon wave.

The company released Pokemon action flipz, stickers, removable tatoos and a puzzle clock.

"At the time we did a promotion with Kraft Singles. They inserted our action flipz in with them and ran some TV commercials."

Riding the wave put the company in a good position to secure more licences.

"We hold more licenses than ever before, and you draw a little from each license," Rose note. "Of course, none of them are quite as powerful as Pokemon was.

"But right now, we have The Simpsons and The X-Men, we have Powerpuff Girls, and Dragonball Z, Sailor Moon and Dextor's Laboratory ... which is our newest acquisition and we're all excited about that."

"So, that's really the biggest challenge is to size up the market."

— Chris Rose
Marketing Director

Artbox also has WWF motion cards and an XFL game card collection, plus many others.

However, Rose says the company is riding a second anime wave which the explains popularity of Dragonball Z.

"Dragonball Z has been out for 10 years and people were into it — the original anime property — and then Pokemon came along," he said. "Now with Pokemon waning, people are re-finding Dragonball Z and they're flocking back to it."

Rose knows how extremely important it is to acquire the trading card license of a product.

"Whenever we can secure the license, it's the Holy Grail" of the business.

But, Artbox is unique in its approach.

Where one company may get the trading card license, Artbox will get the license to produce special and original items that are collectible and enjoyable.

For example, where another company has a license for The Simpsons cards, Artbox has a license to produce "trading stickers and film cells."

That way companies aren't competing against each other with the same product.

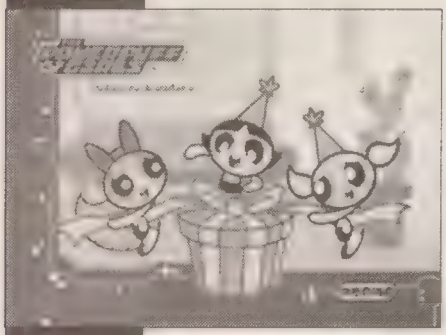
Professionally speaking, however, some of the greatest challenges lie in the unknown — not knowing how a particular trading card or specialty item will do, whether it will be as accepted here as it was in Japan, or if it will translate from one medium to another.

For Artbox, Rose says, "You get a rare opportunity to get something you know is doing well and tried and true. Because it's a Japanese import we really have a looking glass to see ... how did it do, how did it affect sales, what can we do better.

By the time it gets to the States, Artbox has a marketing game plan developed to optimize the opportunity.

"So, that's really the biggest challenge is to size up the market, see what the licensor is doing to support the property. But we like to see how it's doing in other product categories."

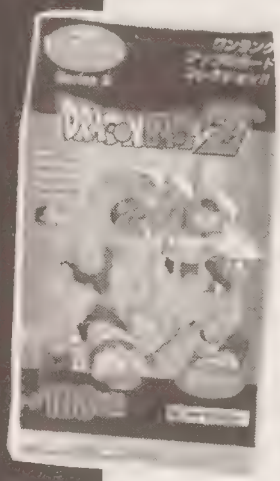
This means gauging how



the property is doing in comic books, multi-media games, on-line. It also means determining the size of the property's following.

"Once in a while you get that magic combination of everything happening right. Dragonball Z, to certain degree, is like that. But Pokemon is probably the best example."

This approach to the non-sports card business is also reflective in the company's work ethic. They utilize state of the art printing, in which their cards — whether trading, film, motion, or stickers — are all of the highest quality. They look good and are presented to the collector very well.



"We make sure we put out a quality product. And quality is number one. We know that to be embraced by the non-sports audience, we need to take care of them.

We put things out in a limited press run."

Artbox doesn't believe in flooding the market and annoying collectors and fans. It's important that the consumer is not over saturated with products that aren't interesting to them.

Artbox believes that would only breed negativity among the buyers — something Artbox is sensitive to. The added benefit to the collector, is that "things go up in price when they're rare."

Which is one of the key factors to enjoying collecting — finding that rare card in a new package!

To add to the value of the rare cards, Rose points to the newer technology being used.

"We add value to it with the latest printing technologies such as chromium, prism boards. We also add value with collectible devises, unique-sized albums that come with special plastic sleeves, and we do a number of promo cards also to support the product."

With the current and future releases of Powerpuff Girls, series two, Dexter's Laboratory, first edition set, another series of The Simpsons film cells at Halloween, and another Dragonball Z set later in the year, Artbox Entertainment is dedicated to fulfilling their customers' demands for their favourite cards and collectibles.

Rose says feedback from the customers is particularly important.

"The feedback we've got is that, although we try and go after the trading card licenses, they like that we're not your typical trading card company. And really, offering more so that somebody is enthusiastic an avid collector in a particular property; we give them more to collect."

Feedback from their website (**www.artboxent.com**) has been very good, particularly since it allows getting their product very convenient for those who don't live near a Wal-Mart, Targets, a specialty shop or comic book store. Customers can order directly from the site, something Rose says is much appreciated based on the e-mails they've received.

Artbox attends the WizardCon in Chicago and the San Diego Comic Book Convention each year. Artbox has attended or been represented by their distributors at the New York and Detroit fairs, the Philadelphia and Las Vegas shows, and have been to Hawaii and Florida.

"We love talking to the consumer at these shows. It gives us the opportunity to shake hands, get feedback, and it gives them a chance to put a face to the product."

It's at the conventions that they learn what their audience would like to see.

"The feedback is very positive and very necessary ... to tweak things, rework things, and drive the interest in our products. We're here for the customer."

With the unique and special varieties of collectibles, and the excellent quality to back it up, the future looks very solid and optimistic for Artbox.

Looking at it from a personal and professional point of view, Rose notes that he would like to see the market share grow, continue to do good for the consumers, and to give "back to the hobby that's given to us and gives us all a job."

"The feedback is very positive and very necessary ... to tweak things, rework things, and drive the interest in our products. We're here for the customer."

He also expects the printing technology to advance and further develop with more "innovative printing processes to pique interest out there."

The essentials of the business and what Artbox will continue to strive to do is simple.

"They (the consumer) want to see something new, and you need to have the hottest properties, and need to maintain collector interest. So if you can cover all those bases, then you're doing pretty well with the company."

For Rose, working for a company like Artbox is "really a dream business. You get to work with the most exciting science fiction and animation properties, and get to put out innovative products that people enjoy.

"You're bringing joy into people's lives. And no matter what's going on around, whatever problems they might have everybody can remember and can feel that sense of excitement when they're ripping open that foil pack and looking for that rare chase card. It's my pleasure to be a part of that!"

Anime: gaming, storytelling with attitude

As anime has gained popularity in North America, the gaming industry has unveiled numerous games tied to the conventions of anime

By
Kevin Davies

My earliest encounter with Japanese animation (anime), was at a party in the late '70's.

The hostess had set aside a screening room for undubbed videos she had acquired through a globe-hopping friend. Unlike most North American animation (Ralph Bakshi excluded), the images and stories presented dramatic situations of an adult nature in a unique action-packed and often sensual style.

Anything is Possible

The anime style arose in the '50s from work of Osamu Tezuka, a pioneer of Japanese animation and creator of Astro Boy and other popular characters. Animation enabled the production of fantastic stories on a fraction of the budget of a live-action film. More than 60 per cent of the TV programs Japan exports are animated.

Comics (manga) are a widely popular entertainment in Japan; complete novel-length stories are published in thick volumes and read without any social stigma by adults.

Gradually, manga/anime began to reach North America, providing new influences for illustrators and game designers.

It initially impacted the comics scene, as revealed through artists such as Wendi Pini (Elfquest) and Colleen Doran (A Distant Soil). The North American publication of Lone Wolf and Cub did much to increase the awareness and demand for manga, and promote the art style.

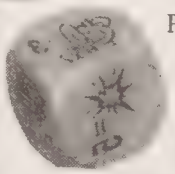
Today, numerous illustrators have incorporated aspects of manga/anime style into their work.

By 1994 anime had a loyal U.S. fan base of more than 40,000 males and females, averaging 15 to 30 years, with over $50 million US in home video sales.

Anime has broadened its subject matter, incorporating popular genres such as science fiction, fantasy, horror, super heroes, crime and romance. Ancillary products include models, toys, electronic games, roleplay games, Collectable Card Games and miniatures.

Giant Robot Combat

The initial appeal of anime to the game market was the fantasy of controlling one or more giant robots or similar devices during battles and duels. Both miniature and RPG enthusiasts were keen to play scenarios incorporating such exciting technologies.



Anime has broadened its subject matter, incorporating popular genres such as science fiction, fantasy, horror, super heroes, crime and romance.

In 1981. Palladium released the RPG Mechanoid Invasion (revised as Mechanoids in 1985).

R. Talsorian Games released Mekton in 1984 (revised as Mekton II in 1987). FASA launched its popular BattleTech tactical board/miniatures game in 1985 followed by the MechWarrior RPG in 1986. Also in 1986 Palladium acquired the licence and released a Robotech: Macross RPG.

Robot Warriors also appeared in 1986, from Hero Games. Sentinels, another giant robot RPG from Palladium, was published in 1987.

While most "mech" RPGs provided character generation rules, there was often little material to suggest any existence beyond of hunting and killing other mechs.

Roleplaying anime

In recent years, RPGs have evolved, shifting away from wargame-like rules to simpler action resolution and more elaborate, character-driven plots.

Games based on manga/anime have followed this trend, providing characters with a real role. In recent years, a new crop of manga/anime influenced and licenced RPGs, CCGs, and

Continued on page 65

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from page 62

Miniatures have been introduced, including: Big Eyes, Small Mouth RPG, Sailor Moon RPG, Dominion Tank Police RPG, Demon City Shinjuku RPG, Techi Muyo! RPG, and El Hazard RPG, (by Guardians of Order); Heavy Gear, Jovian Chronicles, (by Dream Pod 9); Z-G CCG, (by Atom0ton); Sailor Moon CCG, (by Dart Flipcards); Dragonball Z CCG, (by Playoff); BattleTech Miniatures, (by Ral Partha); C.A.V. Miniatures, (by Reaper Miniatures).

Anime's continuing growth in North America assures that many more games will be developed based on this popular film and art style.

Anime characteristics

Provided below are some anime qualities you can adopt for your adventures.

1. For the Hero/Heroine:

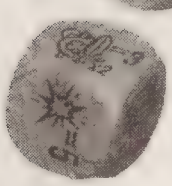
☆ **Heroic Self Sacrifice:** Noble actions to promote the greater good are more desirable than self-preservation.

• **Death Before Dishonour:** Honor is your personal code; your word is your bond. The preservation of your good reputation is worth risking your life.

2. For the Villain:

☆ **Deceipt and Betrayal:** Failing to take advantage of a weak-willed, trusting, fool is itself foolish. The objective is to win — by whatever means possible.

☆ **Living With Dishonour:** While dishonour may destroy Heroes, if dishonourable acts serve their cause, Villians are untroubled by them.



3. For the Plot:

☆ **Important Female Characters:** Strong females possessing distinct advantages and skills add depth to adventures and provide a balance to the typically masculine strengths of courage and combat.

☆ **Character Teams:** Whether brought together as friends, relations, co-workers, survivors of misfortune, or drawn by some supernatural force, groups of characters working toward a common goal are more effective than those functioning independently.

If any hostilities exist between characters, present a challenge that requires mutual co-operation and dependency.

☆ **Duels:** Whether naked or encased in a giant mech, honour demands that great warriors settle significant disagreements by pairing-off and fighting one-on-one — usually to the death. To refuse a duel is to accept dishonour (unless a promise not to duel has been exacted previously). To fight with an unfair advantage is dishonorable.

☆ **Emotion:** Character inter-relationships provide an opportunity for introducing additional dramatic tension, distractions, and plot elements.

☆ **Humor:** Prompted by coincidence, accidents, and hubris, levity offers the opportunity to provide a mood shift and a brief break from the building intensity of the drama.

☆ **Technologies:** Various devices and systems exist that are capable of either enhancing character abilities or posing a challenge or threat to their existence. Huge, morphing, robotic vehicles and spaceships are especially popular.

☆ **Special Powers:** Heroes and Villains are often granted special powers — whether desired or not; their ongoing struggle to control and use them provides additional tension.

☆ **Supernatural Objects or Creatures:** These can impact the plot by becoming the goal of a quest, the subject of a disagreement, an object of facination, desire, or dread, or the responsibility for preservation.

Appearance characteristics

While the type of characters that can be included in an anime-inspired adventure are boundless, three appearance styles dominate:

1. The Hero/Heroine:

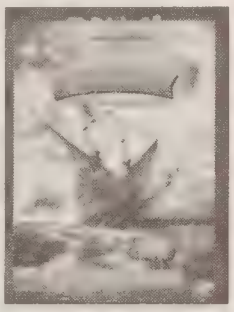
Long legs and relatively little muscle definition; occasionally appearing androgynous if male — child-like if female (unless intended to be sexy, in

Coming Releases

Chaosium releases Cthulhu guide

Chaosium Inc. is scheduled to release a reprint of its The Complete Dreamlands: A sourcebook for Call of Cthulhu in June.

According to the Calfornia company, The Complete Dreamlands provides everything needed for Call of Cthulhu investigators to travel down the 700 steps through the Gates of Deeper Slumber and into the realm of dreams.



The book includes a travelogue of the dreamlands a huge gazetteer, dreamlands character creation rules more than 30 prominent NPC's, more than 60 monsters who dwell within the dreamlands, descriptions of the dreamlands gods and their cults, two adventures to help jump start a dreamlands campaign, and a fold out map of the Dreamlands.

The 192-page source book carries a SRP of $24.95 US.

Gurps-based entry from Steve Jackson Games

Steve Jackson Games has announced that it will launch a roleplaying line covering World War II at the end of the year.

The line begins with the publication of the 176-page core book, GURPS WWII, in December.

The core book will provide a sweeping overview of the 20th century's defining conflict, while the following 128-page and 32-page supplements will contribute additional detail on nations that took part in the fighting and particular battles.

The first supplements will include GURPS WWII: Hand of Steel, a 32-page book on special forces, and GURPS WWII: Iron Cross, 128 pages on Germany and its armed forces.

which case she'll have 36-D breasts). The more heroic or powerful the character, the smaller the head relative to body size. Long, flowing hair (often obscuring part of the face) is common for males and females.

Eyes tend to be large, but the older and/or wiser the character the smaller and more horizontal the eye. The more heroic the character the smaller and more featureless their nose; females have smaller noses than males — the same applies to mouths.

2. The Secondary Character:

These characters tend to display more realistic proportions and may even appear stocky or fat. Facial features are also more in keeping with reality — unless the character is an alien or supernatural being. Long legs to torso size are still common.

3. The Comedic Character:

Many anime stories introduce a jester-like character as a means of offering comic relief. They tend to be shorter, more cartoon-like, and occasionally animalistic (or even actual animals) in their appearance than their dramatic counterparts. Their role includes: distracting amusement, uncovering significant plot points, getting into trouble and/or requiring saving, and shifting attention to other aspects of the plot.

Companies like Guardians of Order have been tapping into the anime market with a variety of anime-based games.

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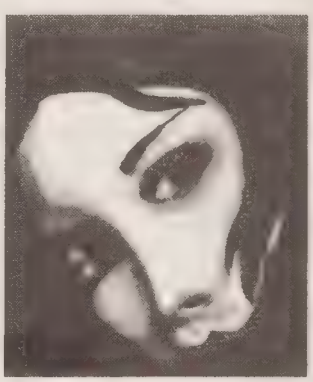
Kevin Davies is a publisher, game designer, and illustrator. His company Peregrine produces the humorous roleplay games Murphy's World and Bob, Lord of Evil and can be reached at peregrine@peregrine-net.com or http://www.peregrine-net.com

Let's Face It.

Psychedelia Gothique has taken a turn for the traditional.



www.razorwings.com

Dart Flipcards's Shrek cards are a visual treat

By Connor

I've long been a fan of Dart Flipcards.

I mean anyone who puts out a set based on Gilligan's Island and the Munsters is OK in my book.

Now, Dart is unveiling a set of cards tied into the release of the computer-animated feature, Shrek! It is a fine complement to the remarkable Dreamworks/PDI movie.

The 72-card set contains six animation cells, six stand up characters including the Mirror and the Dragon and a pair of puzzles.

The quality of these cards are top-notch and the selection of scenes captures the plot and the sensibility of the feature.

I particularly like the inclusion of the animation cells involving some of the embattled fairy tales, as well as the miniature stand-up figures. Nice touches all.

The set also features a pair of promo cards.

The gang at Montreal-based Dart has done an admirable job with the set — especially since the company apparently received the licence for it late in the game.

ALSO worth looking up at your local retailer are Dart Flipcards' Sailor Moon expansion set, the coming Crocodile Hunter set and this August's Betty Boop cards.

RITTENHOUSE ARCHIVES:

Come August, Rittenhouse will unleash cards based on the television series, First Wave.

The 72-card set includes cards with synopsis for each of the series' 66 episodes, as well as autograph cards and costume cards for Tracy Lords and a Sebastian Spence case topper card.

INKWORKS:

Once again, the company has put together a fabulous set with The Mummy Returns.

The 81-card base set contains subsets including: story cards, Tale of Nefertiri cards, movie art storyboard cards and character cards.

The company also has cards based on Lara Croft Tomb Raider about to hit market. This is a 90-card set filled with story cards, gadgets, behind-the-scenes and bonus cards including; puzzle cards, foil embossed cards, autographed cards and Pieceworks cards.

TOPPS:

Please, no more Star Wars! This plea is more an indication of the level of hype than the quality of these cards.

Topps plans an all-foil 90-card set for this summer which will feature cards based on new characters and autograph cards from the movie's actors.

ARTBOX:

I've long been a fan of the Simpsons and its film cards are an interesting addition to the other Simpsons-related releases that have come down the pike during recent years.

From the Shrek's memorable entrance from the outhouse, to Princess Fiona's version of the battle in The Matrix, Dart Flipcards' Shrek series is a visual feast.

Decipher gets rights to Lord of the Rings

Decipher has announced that it has gained exclusive, worldwide rights to produce trading card games and digital trading card games for the epic adventure trilogy The Lord of the Rings from New Line Cinema

The company plans to present its product plans at Toy Fair 2001.

The Virginia-based company will develop and market collectible card games based on all three motion pictures: The Fellowship of the Ring (December 19, 2001), The Two Towers (2002) and The Return of the King (2003).

Rittenhouse's Farscape releases

Rittenhouse Archives will be releasing a couple of Farscape related sets during the coming months which should capture the attention of any Farscape fan.

In June, the company will be releasing a compelling series of motion cards.

Farscape In Motion will be a 60-card all-lenticular base set (2-1/2"x3-1/2" cards) featuring subsets of all the series' top stars, including John Crichton, Aeryn Sun, D'Argo, Zhaan, Chiana, Scorpius, Rygel, Crais and Pilot.

Each box will contain a From The Archives custom card, plus several levels of bonus cards including The Good, The Bad & The Ugly (the show's most compelling guest stars), Ships In Motion, Close Encounters, and Portraits In Motion.

Only 500 cases will be produced.

Following up on the sell-out performance of Farscape Season One, Rittenhouse will launch a set based on the series' second season in September.

Farscape Season Two will offer two costume cards in every box, plus key autograph cards from series stars Virginia Hey, Wayne Pygram and Lani Tupu.

The costume card lineup will include John Crichton, Chiana, Scorpius, Stark, D'Argo, Zhaan and Crais.

The set is scheduled to reach stores Sept. 19.

Astonishing Space Tales a nod to old-time sf

Technology integral to bringing artist's homage to '50s B movies to new audience

Steve Conley is expecting a brighter future. Not only for himself, but also for society. And the Internet is allowing him to share this vision of the future.

That sense of hope manifests itself in Astonishing Space Thrills.

"I didn't want it to be something like Sudden Impact," Conley said of his creation. "Everybody tries to make science fiction heavy and I don't think you can do that.

"I wanted to make sure it was fun and that's why I went over the top title."

Initially, a daily Internet comic strip, the story has been transformed into comic book form and published by Image.

The series is what Conley considers his creation's second season (using an anolgy to Babylon 5).

"I go the bugs out after season one and season two is so much better," Conley notes.

A collection of the new stories is scheduled to reach stores in May.

"The Galaxy story is just too big a story to tell in a regular-sized book."

In Astonishing Space Thrills, the galaxy is inhabited with alien races that come and go and where inhabitants' sense of magic has been replaced by a shakier belief in science.

Blasting through this universe is the hero of the story, Argosy Smith.

Argosy is, according to Conley, the guy we would all be if we just tried every single day. Accompanying Argosy is Theremin, a 100-plus year old former human.

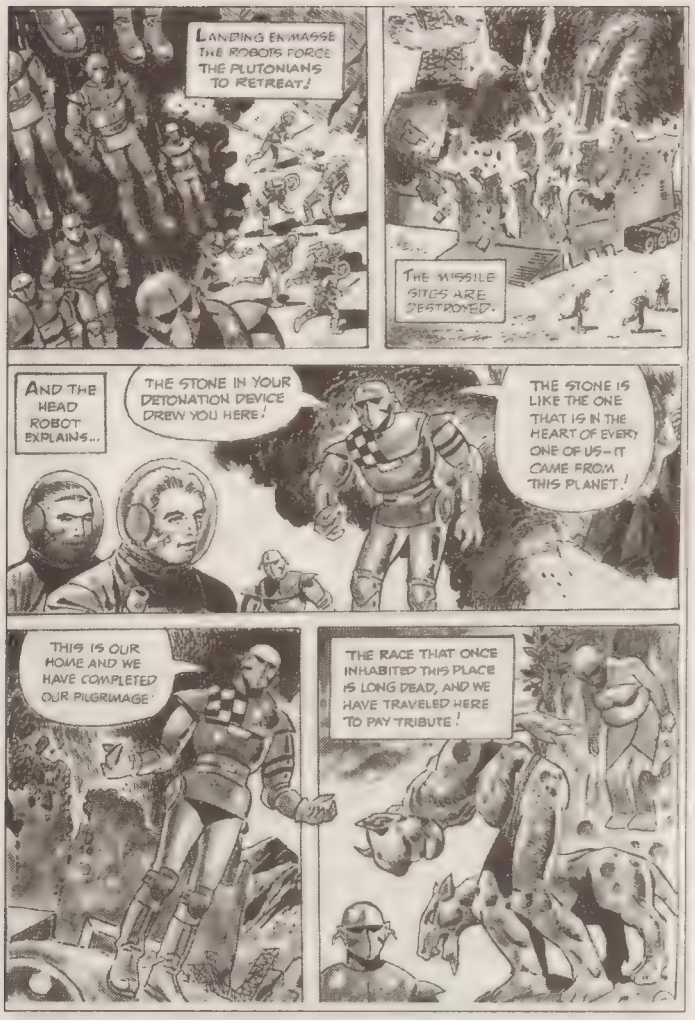
Astonishing Space Thrills is filled with rocketships, rayguns and rampaging robots and the feel of a '50s B movie or even of a '40s serial (this is meant as a compliment).

Fans of Argosy Smith can follow his adventures in Astonishing Space Tales released by Image comics.

A former infographics artist for USA Today and a member of the team that designed the newspaper's website, Conley is a web designer by day.

"They needed people who knew computers, who were familiar with the Internet and who were familiar with the brand," Conley explained.

After two years, he left and began his own web design company.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THIS IS OUR HOME AND WE HAVE COMPLETED OUR PILGRIMAGE.
THE RACE THAT ONCE INHABITED THIS PLACE IS LONG DEAD, AND WE HAVE TRAVELED HERE TO PAY TRIBUTE!

"What it really came down to was having an inverted idea of what the Internet really is as a broadcast medium," Conley explained. "Where you treat it, not as a collections of Web sites where people have to come to your site to see your content."

Conley is troubled by the increasing incidence of companies restricting the use of the information they place on their Web site. With Astonishing Space Thrills, he follows the opposite tact.

The comic strip — as well as music segments or movies — is available to anyone.

"This means I can reach a wider audience," Conley says. "And they don't have to pay."

The strip is viewed about 500,000 times a month.

Once Conley decided he wanted to work on a comic strip and that he wanted the experience to be fun, he set about the task of deciding what he wanted to spend a good chunk of his life pursuing.

"By process of elimination, I got rid of all the things that I thought would stand in the way of me having fun with this thing over time," Conley explained.

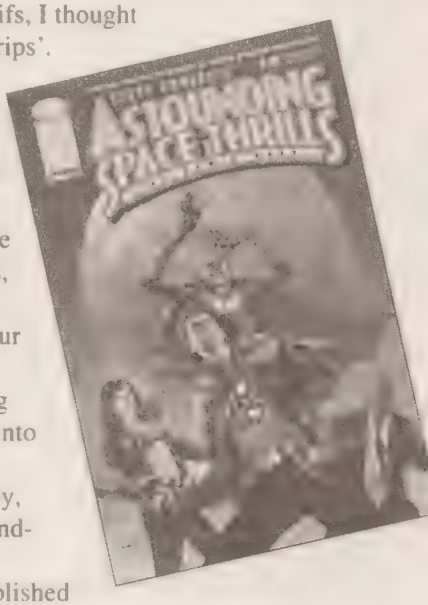
The first thing to go as he began developing the world which would fill the daily Internet strip and eventually the pages of the comic book was the rules of physics.

"From page one, I have nothing holding me back," he said.

The comic strip format used for Astonishing Space Thrills was borne out of necessity because of the limitations of the Internet infrastructure and of computers.

In order to make the strip as accessible as possible, Conley opted to stay away from Flash technology and use a simple gif. The decision meant that the strip would download easier.

"Since I'm stuck with gifs, I thought 'What can I do ... comic strips'.



"It's the closest thing an individual can do to creating a movie by themselves," Conley explained. "You get the visuals, you get the character design, the costuming, you get the sets, you get to direct.

"Everything is under your control."

The roots of Astonishing Space Thrills stretch back into the early '90s.

While still at USA Today, Conley produced a black-and-white comic.

"I didn't want to get published by anyone, because I wanted to tell my own stories," Conley explained of his first foray into independent publishing.

"Even when I was a kid, I don't remember ever drawing someone else's work."

After producing the superhero book, Conley found that circumstances had placed him between two camps — the traditional superhero fan and the readers of independent titles such as Bone, Wandering Star and Cerebrus.

Since superhero fans expected colour, Conley opted instead for a science fiction tale which would be more suitable for rendering in black and white.

That way, the book could get accepted by superhero fans

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Time to open artistic floodgates

More than a decade ago, Maus promised a new world of comics. What happened?

By
Mark Askwith

I first ran across Art Spiegelman's 'Maus' as a small-format insert in the over-sized RAW magazine.

It was an odd pamphlet, stuck into the centre, like an afterthought. In 1986, the first six installments were collected together as a graphic novel, and Maus changed comics forever

In 1986, I wrote that Maus had shown us five things, so let's take a look 15 years later and see how I did.

1. *"Maus has changed the structure of how graphic novels will be written. The individual issues were written with the larger whole in mind."*

I think this is true, although in the hindsight of time, I think Dave Sim may have gotten to this idea concurrently in Cerebus. We have now seen the impact of the "properly structured" graphic novels originally published as serials in the work of Alan Moore, Frank Miller and Neil Gaiman in Watchmen, From Hell, Daredevil: Born Again, and Sandman.

The emergence of the graphic "novel" (rather than a collection of issues) may have changed the comic book industry. As comics wrestle with the questions of serial literature and self-contained storylines, some creators are tackling larger complex issues.

2. *"The packaging of Maus will have an impact on the size and shape of graphic novels."*

Maus broke the "traditional" shape of comics — it was small and intimate — it felt like it was designed to be smuggled ... it was the perfect design for the story.

Sadly, Maus was not the harbinger of a design revolution. The standard comic book formats and design still dominate the marketplace. Only a handful of people, like Drawn and Quarterly gang, and one of the finest designers in comics, Chris Ware, seems to be carrying the torch for innovative new formats.

A wonderful opportunity seems to have gone largely unnoticed and unappreciated

Continued on page 76

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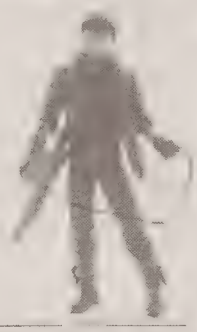
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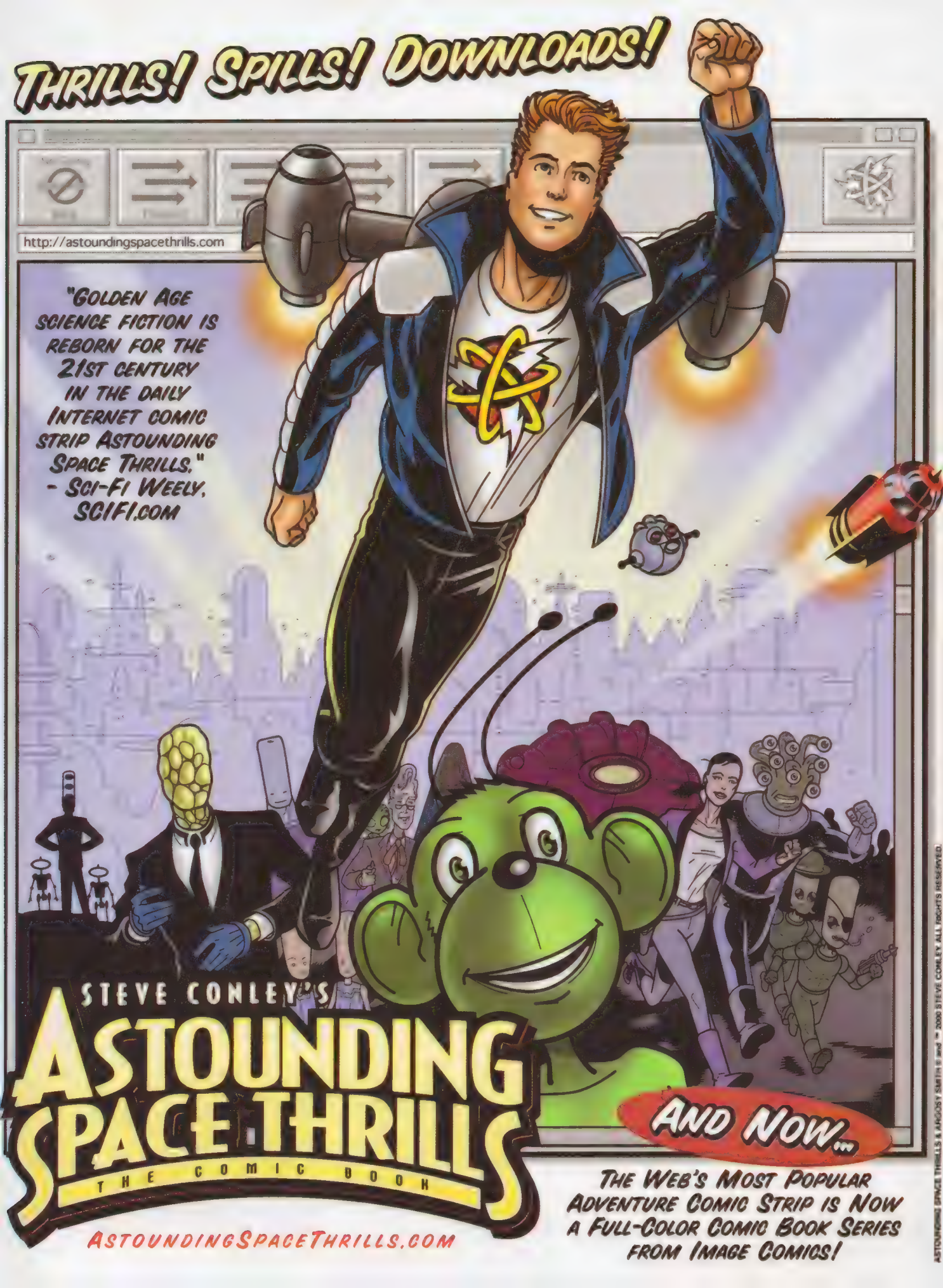
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Curious Books and Comics	631 Johnson St., Victoria, V8W 1M7	(250) 384-1656	C BI RPG AS MI AP CC M Md WL	
Up-Start Comics & Games	1483A Bowen Rd., Nanaimo, V9S 1G4	(250) 741-0101	C BI RPG AR MI M AP B Md HS	

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Saturn Comics	5726 104 St., Edmonton, T6H 2K2	(780) 430-0598	C BI RPG AS B M AP CC OL Cat WL	**

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8th Street Books & Comics	1010 8th St. E., Saskatoon, S7H 0R9	(306) 343-6624	C BI M AP CC Md WL B	
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Comic Cave	1104 Corydon Ave., Winnipeg, S7H 0R9	(306) 318-9636	C BI M AP CC Md WL Cat OL	

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Comic news and more in every issue

Electropolis: Motter's indulgence

The mini-series allows the writer-artist to share appreciation for film noir

Electropolis has been part of an ongoing exploration of a genre for Motter a sort of Thin Man goes to Metropolis.

"It's part of a world that I wanted to continue to explore that started with Mister X and Terminal City and I still wanted to do more work in that genre and this was the next step to do something that was a little more traditional in some ways and a little more burlesque in some other ways," Motter explained.

Electropolis provides Motter an opportunity to indulge in two areas he appreciates — film noir films, such as Dark Passage the Thin Man series, and detective fiction.

"I wanted to do a typical, almost clinched, hard-boiled detective like Philip Marlow, Raymond Chandler, Dashell Hammet kind of thing" Motter explained. "I just wanted to do that to get it out of my system."

The genesis for Electropolis came when Motter was developing a film noir treatment of Batman (a 120-page treatment of the Bat as if he was film by John Huston in the '30s). During the course of his research, Motter came across a wealth

of material in regards to both filmmaking and literature that he believed would be fertile ground for a parody.

"I still had this playground I'd created of this 1930s vision of the future," Motter explained. "So I decided that if I'd just combine these two things ... a 1939 World's Fair vision of the future and a Raymond Chandler story ... it would make an interesting burlesque vision.

"It took on a life of its own after the first episode was written."

To accentuate the story, Motter adapted his drawing style to the material. He became more deliberate and simplified his style.

"I've always been a fan of my old friend Mike Mignola because of the sheer economy of what he can do with just a few lines and a big chunk of black, a big chunk of grey and a big chunk of brown," Motter explained. "I don't think I came anywhere near that sort of stylistic refinement, but it was something to shoot for."

Originally, Electropolis was to be the third installment of the Terminal City series — Terminal City and Aerial Graffiti — Motter had produced for Vertigo. But company officials were unable to justify the expense of producing the third segment.

"They wanted to do it, but they just weren't able to justify putting out a third mini-series under that banner because the sales of the second mini-series were disappointing," Motter explained. "As hard as we tried, the people at DC really wanted to do

Continued on page 77

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Recommended Reading

Looking at the racks upon racks upon racks of comic books until you're catonic? Can't decide what will give you the biggest bang for your hard-earned buck?

Here's what some of our experts have been suggesting to their customers

"The Green Arrow series is well-done and worth looking at."

Kevin Sauder
Mirror Universe

"Ultimate Spiderman is still hot and there's good movement from the Brotherhood."

Gerry Macdonald
Phoenix Comics

"Comedy stuff like the Adeventures of Barry Wean and Leonore are popular.""

Jeff Smith
Comic Hunter

"Daredevil Yellow is pretty amazing."

Robin
Comic and Book Emporium

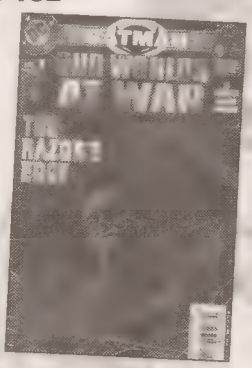
Also mentioned:
Rising Stars 15
Blue Monday 3
Green Arrow 4
Wolverine 163 & 164y
Adventures of Barry Wean
Daredevil Yellow
The Brotherhood

Next issue ... be here for:
Stuart Immomen...Mike Wieringo
... Tim Levins....

PARSEC's Top 10 Countdown

These are the top selling books in Canada, according to a national survey of retailers. To find out who's taking part in the survey, please see page 102

#1 Batman: Our Worlds at War 1



Story: Ed Brubaker
Art:Stefane Gaudiano
Inks: Roberta Tewes

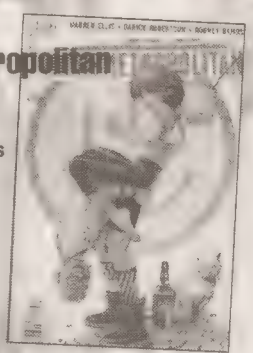
#2 Ultimate Spider-Man 10

once again
Story: Brian Michael Bendis
Art: Mark Bagley
Inks: Art Thibert

#3 X-Men 114

Story:Moorison
Pencils: Quitely
Inks: Townsend

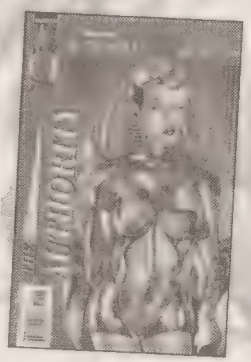
#4 Transmetropolitan 46



Story: Warren Ellis
Art: Darick Robertson
Inks: Rodeney Ramos

#5 The Authority 23

A first-timer
Story: Tom Payer
Pencils: Dustin Ngyen
Inks:Rich Smith and Jason Martin

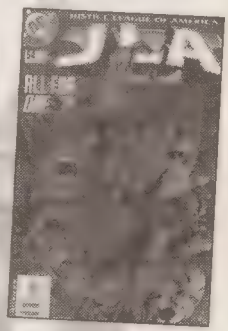


#6 Punisher 25

Story: -
Pencils: -
Inks: -

#7 Spawn 108

Story: Brian Holguin, Todd McFarlane
Pencils: Angel Medina
Inks: various



#8 JLA 54

Contines to remain top-10 fav
Story: Mark Waid,
Pencils: Bryan Hitch
Inks: Paul Neary

#9 X-Men 295

Slips a bit since last survey
Story: Joe Casey
Pencils: Ian Churchill
Inks: Art Thibert, Norm Rapmund

#10 Adventures of Superman 593

Our Worlds at War saga continues and so does interest in this title
Story:Joe Casey
Art: Mike Wieringo
Inks: Joe Morgan Jr.

Coming Releases

Selected spring/summer releases and their suggested retail price in US dollars.

July

Dark Horse

The Complete Madman Vol 4 (TP)	$17.95
F5 Origin	$2.99
Planet of the Apes #2 (of 3)	$2.99

DC

Superman #172	$2.25
Batman: Evolution (TP)	$12.95
The Titans	$2.50
The Spectre #7	$2.50

Image

The Agency #1	$2.50
Darkness #40	$2.50
Magdalena: Blood Divine (TP)	$9.95
Witchblade #50	$4.95

Indies

7 Guys of Justice #10	$2.00
Legend of the Sage #1 (of 4)	$2.99
Astra	$2.95
Gold Digger Vol. 2 #24	$2.95

Marvel

Ultimate Spider-man #11	$2.25
Fantastic Four 2001	$2.99
X-Treme X-Men #3	$2.99

August

Dark Horse

Little Annie Fannie (TP)	$24.95
The Horror of Collier County (TP)	$12.95
Usagi Yojimbo #51	$2.99
Spyboy: Bet Your Life (TP)	$9.95
The Tenth: Blackout (TP)	$14.95

DC

Superman & Batman: Generations	$5.95
Swamp Thing: A Murder of Crows	$19.95
Tom Strong Book One (TP)	$14.95
Superman #173	$2.25
Just Imagine: Wonder Woman	$5.95

Image

Kabuki	$2.95
Aria: The Soul Market #5	$2.95
Go Girl #4	$3.50
Mr. Right #1	$2.95

Indies

Futurama #5	$2.50
Whitechapel Freak	$2.95
Manga X #4	$6.95
Cerebus #269	$2.25

Marvel

New X-Men #117	$2.25
Punisher #3	$2.99
Daredevil Yellow #3	$3.50
Thor #40	$2.25

Askwith

from page 70

by the comic book community.

3. *"Now that Maus has won the Pulitzer, the media will have to acknowledge that comics have re-emerged as a vibrant and important medium."*

While it's true that Art Speigelman and comics were the subject of a media whirlwind in the mid-80s, winning the Pulitzer seems to have done little for the image of comics. Maus, Dark Knight and Watchmen and a handful of other graphic novels are now perceived as the Golden Age, before the Fall.

For more than a decade, with the notable exception of Neil Gaiman's Sandman and Scott McCloud's Understanding Comics, comics seemed to have abandoned the brave new world provided by the mid-eighties comics.

Only in the past few years with the publication of new collections — Chris Ware's Jimmy Corrigan, Ben Katchor's Julius Knipl and a handful of others — have we seen any real media interest in comic books. The media are quick to embrace certain works or creators, but they rarely praise a medium.

4. *"Maus will spearhead comics into universities."*

I think that comics have been ripe for academic study for years. Maus was placed on university reading lists in historical or Jewish studies, and doesn't seem to have furthered the comic book cause.

Interestingly, Scott McCloud's Understanding Comics, along with Sandman and the mid-80s Superhero books are featured on Media Studies Reading Lists.

While I'd like to see Maus studied more closely as sequential narrative, I think it has set a wonderful precedent as a work worthy of serious academic debate and discussion.

5. *"The success of Maus will inspire creators to tackle a whole new range of genres."*

In 1986 the comic book marketplace was dominated by superheroes. It seemed obvious to me that superheroes were headed for a fall, and new genres would take their place. Breakthroughs in printing technology seem to make walking icons seem silly and outdated.

I thought we'd see a renaissance in historical and biographical comics. I've long thought that one of the subtle things about Maus was that it felt so intimate, so handmade.

There were elements of the diary, of handwriting, of craft that made Maus an intensely personal statement. I thought that other creators would recognize this, and the floodgates would open. I think that one of the major failings of modern comics is that this path, for the most part, has not been followed.

I think it is time now, in 2001, for the comic book community to reflect of the lessons of Maus.

I think comics are at a crossroads, and we need to examine some of the possibilities that the critical and commercial success of Maus opened up for the medium.

For, if we don't act now, a wonderful opportunity to advance the medium may be lost.

Mark Askwith was the writer on the Prisoner comic series and one of Canada's foremost experts on comic books. He is also a producer with Space: The Imagination Station.

Mandrake, Miskin ready to give you the creeps

Image Comics, in association with artist Tom Mandrake and writer Dan Mishkin have announced the publication of their creator-owned full-colour series, Creeps, in October.

Immediately after the book is launched, a Creeps website will be established at **www.creepscomic.com.**

The website will feature a nine-page preview taken from the series' first issue.

Although he refuses to categorize Creeps by genre, Mishkin says the series will appeal to fans of both the edgy horror of Mandrake's work on The Spectre and Martian Manhunter, as well as the offbeat humor of his own Blue Devil.

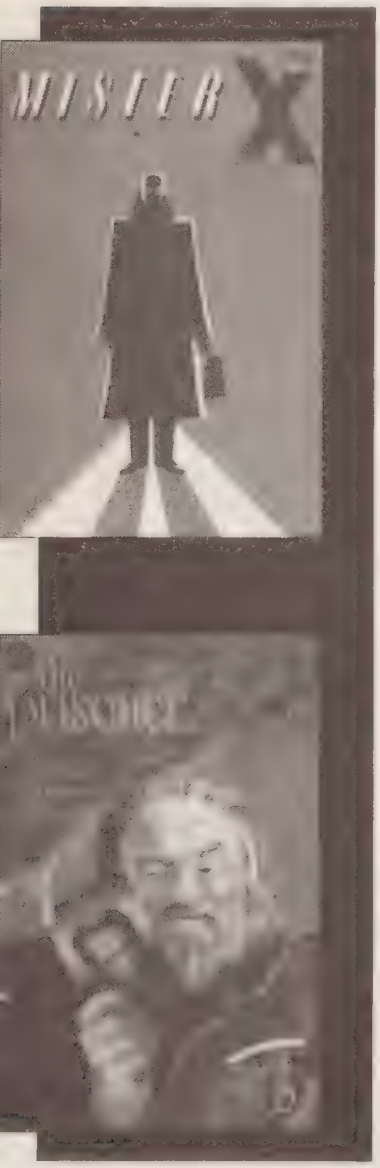
"But," he adds, "the truth is there's nothing quite like Creeps, which is one of the things I love about it."

it, but they just couldn't get it past the number crunchers."

So, Motter elected to take the project to another publisher.

"And it's not like DC doesn't keep me busy on other things."

Dark Horse had expressed an interest in bringing the title out under its Maverick imprint, but during the course of discussions, the imprint had reduced the number of submissions that it was accepting for the line. This opened the door for Image to fill the gap.



Motter met with Image reps at last year's San Diego comic convention and a deal was done.

By that point in time, Motter had composed a 10-15 page proposal with about six sample pages that provided a description of the characters and a setup for the series. Eventually, those pages were incorporated in the first issue.

"I had a package that Image was eager to look at," he recalls. "The timing was right for it to go to Image."

The initial story arc will carry for six issues.

"Six issues is enough to collect into some kind of anthology, that's where the money in the comic book market is these days, things that they can keep in inventory and on backlist," Motter explained. "retailers aren't equipped to stock back issues for very long of all the books from all the publishers. They're finding that a real crunch.

As a result, Motter explained, there is an increasing interest within the industry for material which can be collected into trade paperback form and sold in foreign markets.

Complementing Electropolis on the stands will be a web series composed by Flash animators RDA Studio and placed on the web by Banookdotcom— in Halifax, N.S. For that project, Motter provided storyboarding and directing services for the trailer and first episode.

"The web guys are woefully ignorant of what was going on in the web in regards to the comic market," Motter said. "They didn't know about Stan Lee dotcom or Dark Horse's attempt with Haunted Man.

While Image sends Motter's Electropolis to newsstands, a Halifax, N.S., studio is putting a Flash version of the series on the Internet. The continuing series can be found at www.banook.com/electropolis.

"But sadly all of those things have fallen more from a lack of financial scheme than anything else.

Because the Electropolis book would keep him busy for a year, Motter could not commit to launching a new project with the Halifax company.

The solution was to link the comic book and web series. As a result, the web series will have the same characters and setting as the print version, but the stories will be different.

"The characters are a detective ad his girl Friday and all the villains and the femme fatales and the surrounding cast from the same city, they're just working on a different case file from Menlo Park's case," Motter explained. "It's a story that's very much oriented to an Internet publication."

The three-minute episodes — which take the cue for their form from movie and radio serials — will be updated weekly. Depending on Internet users' response, the Flash file format of the episodes could be adapted to a form that would be compatible for broadcast.

If it is, then Electropolis could be sold as an animation feature. In fact, a television network in Europe has already shown an interest in the project. ☆

With the prospect of a little wealth, everyone likes to play some...

Games

story by
Frederick D Brown
art by
Joanne Mutch

Fog blanketed Drum Island, dulling the jagged profiles of rocky cliffs, hushing the sullen gulls. Beneath its chill weight the ocean swells heaved sluggishly, and within its dank embrace the glow from the station quickly died. Moisture dripped from cement and rock. Even the instrument panels inside the control room had begun to mist over. Lenny cursed as he wiped off a dial.

He swore again when he saw the reading; the output from the generator was definitely decreasing.

At this rate, he had less than a day before the automated mining operations which were methodically chewing up the ocean floor around this miserable island would commence to shut down. Maritime Minerals Incorporated would sack him if he allowed that to happen.

Grumbling to himself, Lenny scanned the panels. Damn! The trouble wasn't in the generator, it was in the nuclear reactor which powered the generator. That scared him. It looked as if there might be something wrong with the fuel rods; what it was he couldn't tell yet. But he'd have to investigate. That meant shutting down the reactor and then replacing one or more of the rods.

The prospect chilled him. Ever since the training course, he'd been plagued by a recurring nightmare. He would find himself trapped in the access tunnel, the air in his radiation suit growing stale while fuel rods tumbled out of the hot reactor, spitting neutrons like angry wasps. Relentlessly they piled up until he was pinned against the jammed hatch. He'd scream obscenities while struggling with the locked mechanism. His back seared and blistered.

He shook the image away and reached toward the button labelled CONTROL ROD/MANUAL INSERT.

"Please do not do that, Leonard."

Lenny twisted in his seat, then sprang up, gaping at the sight of a tuxedo-clad stranger seated at the table behind him. The flaming red of his hair and goatee was matched in his eyes. A faint tang of sulphur hung in the air.

"Christ! Where'd you come from?"

"Careful, Leonard. For your own safety, NEVER make any further reference to THAT upstart. As for where I come from, why I've been here all along."

Leonard strode purposefully to a tall cupboard from which he removed a shotgun. He swung back to face the stranger, legs apart, gun aimed firmly at the intruder's chest. "I don't know who the Hell you are, but this gun'll spread your insides all over that wall if don't get the fuck outa my station right now!"

"Can't do that, my friend. Your reactor is home to myself plus quite a few of my associates and ... admirers. So sit down. We have much to discuss." The stranger motioned towards the other chair at the table. "By the way, you may call me Blut."

Lenny wanted to remain standing; however, Blut's voice was oddly compelling. Before he realized what was happening, he was seated. The shotgun lay on the floor.

Blut continued. "You should be proud, Leonard. You are dealing with a very important being. I am the subdemon in

charge of the Drum Island Reactor Community."

Lenny leaned forward in his chair. "Ah, shit. You're just some crazy bast ... "

Blut's eyes glowed scarlet. Lenny's mouth froze open.

"Hell is expanding, Leonard, as it has been for millennia. Sure, we had a little setback a couple of thousand years ago, but that didn't last long. Now we need more space, and nuclear reactors are ideal.

"You see, we demons and other assorted souls need heat. Those ancient seers got it wrong; they thought burning in Hell forever was a torment. Not so. Cold is the torment. As long as we can remain in intense heat, we feel great.

"Until recently we had to make do with the nether regions, the layer just under the Earth's mantle. But it's not nearly hot enough for our liking, and it's rather messy, what with all that stinking lava bubbling around. And volcanoes. Quite a few demons have been spewed out during eruptions. Truly embarrassing. Occasionally some imbeciles claiming to be magicians tried to take the credit for our sudden appearance. We usually shredded them." Blut chuckled at the recollection.

"So we've opened a branch of Hell in the core of your reactor. Damned souls are extremely small; why you'd be amazed at how many of them could fit on the sharp end of a pin. And what you see of me right now is merely an illusion. Consequently, we can sustain a substantial colony in your reactor.

"It's quite nice ... clean, hot. We laze about all day long, basking in the heat and playing our little games. Most amusing, believe me."

The subdemon carefully examined his talons, which Lenny somehow had not noticed before. "So you see, Leonard, we do not want you to shut down the reactor. We're the reason the power output is low. We're diverting some of the heat."

Blut smiled, and Lenny's mouth unfroze. He looked bewildered. Finally he spluttered, "Supposing I believe you. I could change the settings to run the pile hotter, but that would use the fuel up faster. There'd be questions, and it would be my neck on the block."

When his trembling had finally subsided, he donned his radiation suit and, carrying the copper chunks in a small sack, entered the access tunnel which led to the reactor buried in the granite heart of the island.

The subdemon grinned. "No problem, Leonard. Your fuel contains both fissile and non-fissile uranium. Our abilities allow us to alter the wave functions of particles." Lenny looked blank, but Blut continued anyhow. "With this talent we can direct neutrons to go anywhere we want. In this case we could pile them into the nuclei of non-fissile uranium. You know what that means?"

Lenny continued to look blank for a moment, then brightened.

"You could make plutonium."

Blut beamed. "Good thinking, Leonard. And as you realize, plutonium is an excellent fuel, far better than uranium. So the reactor can run hotter and still use up fuel rods at the normal rate."

Lenny thought about this. "OK. But what's in it for me?"

Blut looked very pleased. "A reasonable question, Leonard. Seeing as we exist inside your reactor, we can look after it for you. If a part is about to fail, we can simply rearrange its atoms even before your instruments would indicate a problem. In fact, we can handle any emergency well before it happens ... and before you have to go down that access tube."

The demon leaned forward and stared intently into Lenny's eyes. "But you've got to keep the reactor running."

Lenny appeared to ponder for a moment, but in reality he had already made up his mind. "OK," he replied.

"Excellent! It's nice to have a partner with your intelligence." At that, Blut grinned and vanished. The sulphur fumes took somewhat longer to dissipate.

Lenny consulted his manuals, made the necessary changes on the control panel, and sat for a long time, thinking and scheming. Eventually he dropped off to sleep.

It took Lenny several days before he worked up his courage to try the scheme. First he took a section of copper pipe and cut it up into small pieces. Then he stood in front of the panel and began to reach for the control-rod button again.

A husky voice stopped him. "Hello, sweetheart."

Lenny stared at the voluptuous nude woman poised shamelessly in the corner by his cot. Scarlet hair cascaded across her shoulders, stopping just short of the swelling breasts. Deep green eyes regarded him with an interest that both stimulated and frightened him. She slid sensually along the length of the cot and stretched with feline grace.

"Wh ... Wh... Where's Blut?"

"Why, I'm here, Lenny. Have you forgotten so quickly, my darling? I'm all illusion. What you see is not what you get."

Lenny swallowed nervously, momentarily distracted from his quest. Then he screwed up his courage. "Well then, I figure it this way. If you can change uranium into plutonium, you should be able to change these copper chunks into gold. Right?"

Blut smiled and flicked her tongue across flaming red lips.

"I can tell you've got it all figured out, honey. You don't give us much choice. Of course we can do that. But you will have to insert them yourself into one of the fuel rods."

"Yea, OK. How long will it take?"

"There's a lot of atoms in those chunks. And some of our help are nearly as lazy dead as when they were alive." She paused. "Probably about a week."

Actually it would take a few milliseconds, but Blut lied whenever possible. It was a matter of some pride.

"And Lenny, I know it's lonely out here, and I am so adorable, but you mustn't indulge in any sexual advances. You wouldn't survive the experience." Blut blew him a kiss, cupped her jutting breasts with fingers already growing

longer, shimmered and vanished.

Lenny shivered. "Goddam bitch."

When his trembling had finally subsided, he donned his radiation suit and, carrying the copper chunks in a small sack, entered the access tunnel which led to the reactor buried in the granite heart of the island. It took him the better part of an hour to insert the probe, engage a rod, and draw it with extreme care out of the pile. A mechanical arm was then used to unscrew the plug at the end and withdraw about half of the fuel. This went into lead containers stored in the floor of the passageway. Lenny placed the copper, piece by piece, into the rod, plugged it, and slid it back into the reactor.

After he emerged, he sat and shook for an hour.

A week later he repeated the procedure and extracted about a kilogram of pure gold. He dumped it onto the table, then sat and stared at that gleaming golden mound, dreams and fantasies chasing through his mind. When the daylight began to fade he roused himself, stuffed his haul into a bag and hid it under his cot.

He was very happy.

But, as time passed, Lenny grew increasingly restless. Those gold chunks drew his mind. Day and night he thought of little else, one part of his mind seemed awash in a golden glow. Eventually, when the pull became stronger than his fear of the tunnel, Lenny carved up the rest of the copper pipe, traversed the portal to the Midas machine, and one week later buried his hands in a fresh pile of gold. This joined the rest in his bag under the bed.

Lenny was very, very happy.

And so was Blut.

A few days later, Lenny went outside into the bright sunlight. He thought the fresh air might dispel some of the nausea he'd been feeling lately. He walked across the concrete pad to the top of the steps that led down beside the rocky cliff to a small dock. Below him the ocean churned, drenching the dock and the lower steps with salt spray. The wind lifted his hair and he inhaled deeply. Yes, he did feel better.

The corroded railing grated under his hands. And as he looked down at the rusted iron, he pictured solid gold bars.

The work went slowly. The only remaining hacksaw blade was dull, and he had to be careful not to break it. Besides, the sores on his hands had begun to bleed. But he was driven by the vision, and by sunset the railing was gone, cut up into short pieces. By midnight it was inside the reactor.

That night, Lenny dreamed. The nightmare had changed. Instead of a fuel rod hissing neutrons at him, he was being buried under an avalanche of gold dust. It rose higher and higher, crushing his legs, burning across his chest, searing his nostrils. He awoke screaming.

"You do not look at all well, Leonard." Blut stood beside the cot, his figure steaming softly of sulphur. His tuxedo glistened like beetle wings.

"Just a bad dream. What do you want?"

"Oh, it's not what I want. I just came to tell you that your next gold shipment is ready. A little earlier than expected, but we've had a massive increase in our work force lately. You can pick up the gold whenever you desire."

This time, Blut sank slowly down through the floor, grinning all the way.

"Bloody show off," Lenny grumbled. "If he doesn't smarten up I'm going to stuff the whole damn station into that reactor. Then we'll see what time he and his playmates have for games."

He grumbled, muttered and swore all the way along the passage to the rods and back. When he emerged, he found that a storm was building. The temperature had dropped, the wind blustered fitfully, and rain was just beginning to splatter the windows. He took the bag from under the cot and spilled its gleaming contents across the table. Then he added his latest haul. He sat for a long time just running his hands through the jumble of golden pieces. Then, with a sigh, he stashed it all back into the bag.

He felt so tired! He fell asleep at the table, his head nuzzled against the treasure. Manic laughter filled his dreams.

At midnight the shrill hoot of the radiation sensors awakened him. He was still trying to make sense of this when a clown's figure coalesced in front of him. The bulbous nose pulsed redly like an infected sore and fire flickered behind the demon's eyes.

"Curtain time, Lenny. Final act's coming up." The figure capered and then began a lazy cartwheel through the air.

"Damn it, Blut! What's happening?"

Blut stopped in mid turn and hung upside down. "Why Leonard, you seem to have some radioactive material in this room. Better find it fast."

A chuckle gurgled in Blut's throat.

Lenny staggered over to the equipment locker and removed a Geiger counter. The instant he turned it on, the needle jumped violently and the meter hissed its warning. He turned slowly around, holding the instrument at arm's length. The highest readings came from the direction of the table.

Lenny staggered over to the equipment locker and removed a Geiger counter. The instant he turned it on, the needle jumped violently and the meter hissed its warning.

Fire seemed to roar deep inside the clown's chest. "Oh, my goodness, Leonard. Could it be the gold?"

Lenny gulped, then walked slowly towards the table. The needle rose higher and higher.

"You're just trying to fool me."

Blut rotated to a sitting position, still in mid air.

"No Leonard. Earlier perhaps ... not now. But we did keep our bargain. We gave you one hundred percent pure gold. You didn't say anything about it not being radioactive."

Cramps gripped Lenny's stomach and he collapsed, retching. When it seemed as if nothing could possibly be left in his stomach, he looked up at Blut.

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"I don't believe a word of what you say. You're just trying to trick me out of my gold. Well, enjoy your little games, but count me out. I'm not playing."

"You lying bastard!"

"Why, Leonard, I thank you for the compliment. With good references like that I may soon be promoted to full-fledged demon."

Lenny staggered to his feet, scooped up his bag, and sidled towards the door.

"I don't believe a word of what you say. You're just trying to trick me out of my gold. Well, enjoy your little games, but count me out. I'm not playing. And just remember who controls your reactor heat. Now, I'm going to hide my gold outside where you'll never find it. Then I'm coming back in to shut this reactor down. You and your bloody playmates can freeze in your fucking Hell!"

Lenny slammed the door behind him and scurried across the rain-swept concrete.

Blut chuckled to itself.

"Game's over Leonard. You lose." The chuckle swelled into hideous laughter which shook the walls of the station.

Outside, Lenny reached the top of the steps just as a gust of wind filled his eyes with salt spray. Blinded, he grasped for a railing which no longer existed, slipped, and tumbled over the side into the thrashing sea. His last words were lost in the roar of the waves ... which was probably just as well.

The gold carried him quickly to the bottom. All around him the water glowed a soft, steady radiation blue. Fish avoided the body for years.

A storm slashed its way across Tiny Barrow Island, howling and swirling about the station. Inside, Liz made her decision and reached toward the control-rod button. As she did, she noticed a faint tang of sulphur.

"Please do not touch that, Elizabeth."

Too much to take

Sven

A story by
Leah Silverman

It was a perfect day for a suicide, really, but Nicole didn't think about that until the phone rang. Solid grey sky, cold, rain. She was writing her latest report on Sven's development, and a tricky, elusive thing it was. Such a depressed, pensive boy that one! Not like the others, not at all.

She shook her head as she reached for the receiver-switch of the phone. Audio only, as she preferred it at work. Such a good boy. Mature for 15. Strong, intelligent. He would be perfect if it wasn't for his weeks of despair, his nightmares. Everything a mother could want. At that she afforded herself a small smile.

"Hello?" she said evenly, voice directed toward the phone's receiver. She slid her glasses up the bridge of her nose with one finger, trying to continue her work. "Nicole Mantas here."

"Ms. Mantas?" The voice was hesitant, quiet, with the peculiar silver resonance that she could have recognized anywhere.

"Sven? Why are you calling, honey? Shouldn't you be at the tutor?"

"I...didn't go. I have to talk to you." Why did his voice sound so choked? Had he been crying? A sliver of ice eased its way down Nicole's spine and jabbed into the pit of her stomach.

"Sure, honey. What is it?"

"I'm sorry, Ms. Mantas. But I don't want to live anymore." Nicole's breath stuck.

"What?"

"I've tied a cord to the lamp chain ... I just called to tell you ... And say good bye." Nicole's fingers gripped white at the desk's edge. Her voice sounded tinny and loose as she tried to form her words.

"Sven ... Why?"

"I've been watching the news," he said, which explained everything. "Fifteen children died in New Palestine today. Two women and 30 soldiers. Nearly a thousand died in America, and three men were executed in Iran. And I'm doing homework."

Nicole might have laughed, could have if it were anyone else, but not Sven.

"I feel so useless," he said.

"Oh, Sven," Nicole pleaded. "Your death won't help. I know it's terrible — but what could you have done? Even if you had been there..."

"Ms. Mantas," Sven said quietly, his voice like a dam, gently stopping Nicole's frantic torrent, "Then why was I born? What am I here for if I can't do anything? I can't live like that! I don't think anyone could."

Nicole's chest was so tight she felt the air around her had turned solid. She was so afraid. Sven was dying and she was a billion kilometres away, clinging to a lifeline of plastic, trying to keep him from drowning in a self-made sea of despair. With an effort she forced her voice to penetrate from the depths of her body:

"You were born ... Because you had to be. Sebastien and I have never expected anything from you except that you grow and ... and learn. God, Sven," she whispered, her resolve cracking. She blinked under her glasses and tears spilled down her cheeks. "All I ever wanted was for you to be happy..."

"I know, Ms. Mantas, I'm sorry. It just didn't work. It's not your fault. It's me.

"Life is so easy for you," he continued. "You've always had real choices. It must be wonderful. Whatever you do is

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your own decision. You don't have to help, fight, love ... anything! I don't have that luxury."

He paused a moment, composing his thoughts. "I'm not that lucky. I am a creation with a purpose, but I can't carry out that purpose. So I am life with no life."

"No!" Nicole cried, as if he was already lost to her, "you're wrong!" She closed her eyes and inhaled, trying to calm herself. "I've never expected anything of you other than that you live...!" She felt like a maze-rat, scrambling frantically for some escape, but only finding more walls. "Dying won't help," she repeated. It was all she had left to say.

"I'm sorry," he answered softly. "I really don't want to hurt you, but I just can't live this non-life anymore. I'd rather not live at all. I'm sorry. I really am. Good-bye. I love you."

He hung up the phone. Nicole's hands were trembling so hard she could barely shut the phone off. Outside the rain hurled itself against the window, but its violence could not match what she felt.

She didn't want to tell Sebastien Cole. She wouldn't have taken the time at all, except that she had a professional obligation to tell him about Sven's death. It felt ugly, sharing the suicide with him.

She ran to his office and barged in, slamming the door hard against the side wall. Sebastien looked up coldly from his computer screen.

"Sven is going to kill himself!" she yelled before he could reprimand her intrusion. "We've got to stop him!"

Sebastien's impeccable face moved smoothly into an annoyed scowl, then it relaxed and he began laughing.

"I should have known," he said. "A suicide! Oh, that's beautiful!" He stopped laughing and took in her pale, trembling form, his eyes impassive. "Come on," he said. "He'll be dead by now. We might as well go see what's left."

He stopped her as she attempted to run again, as they went down to the residence levels.

"Please," he said tiredly, "he'll be long since dead." He gripped her arm tightly, forcing her to walk calmly beside him.

"He told me, you know," she said softly, keeping her eyes straight ahead of her. Her whole body jumped with the need to get to the boy. "He told me he had always known what you really felt about him. He said he hated you."

The lie tasted bitter in her mouth, but it was worth it if she could wound him. Sebastien only laughed.

"I'm not surprised," he said. "He always was very clever. Very observant." He glanced at Nicole sharply. "Do you really think I'd care what he thought?"

They said nothing else until they reached Sven's room. Nicole hesitated, but Sebastien casually unlocked the door. It swung in with a faint whisper.

Nicole might have screamed were she not so cold inside. He was there, immaculate in death, hanging. She walked in mechanically, gazing silently at his body. Sven's bangs stirred gently in the breeze from the air vent. He looked as beautiful as life, but for the pained angle of his neck and the odd, remote twitching of his hands.

"It's a good thing he didn't try pills, isn't it?" Sebastien asked rhetorically. His mouth was a thin line of satisfaction. "He would have been bitterly disappointed."

Nicole gingerly touched Sven's thigh, but it was like ice. She jerked her hand back.

Sebastien walked around the dead boy, studying him. He moved the tipped chair and climbed on it, so that he was level with Sven's head, speaking as he looked into the lifeless eyes. "Maybe they'll listen to me now. I was right. Seven tries and I was still right." He glanced at Nicole, to make sure she had heard him, and his eyebrows raised as he saw she was sobbing quietly to herself. "Why on Earth are you crying?" he asked.

Nicole screamed at him, then. Her hands were clenched at her sides, her words exploding out of her with the force of her hate: "Sebastien, you bastard! He was my son!"

"Don't flatter yourself," Sebastien said. And, reaching to the switch under Prototype Sven's jawline, he shut him off.

☆

10 questions

If it scares the author, it'll scare the reader

with Edo van Belkom

Edo van Belkom made an auspicious debut in the speculative fiction field when his first short story sale, Baseball Memories, was an Aurora Award nominee and reprinted in Year's Best Horror Stories 20. Since that first sale in 1990, van Belkom has sold more than 160 stories of science fiction, fantasy, horror and mystery to such magazines as Parsec, Palace Corbie, Storyteller, Haunts and RPM, as well as to anthologies Northern Frights 1, 2, 3, 4, Shock Rock 2, Deathport, Seductive Spectres, Demon Sex, Robert Bloch's Pyschos and Best American Erotica, 1999. His first novel, Wyrm Wolf, published in 1995, was a Locus bestseller and a finalist for the 1995 First Novel Bram Stoker Award.

1 What is horror?

Contrary to what most people might think about horror, it's not simply a literary genre where Stephen King, Clive Barker and Peter Straub are shelved.

Rather, it's an emotional state in which fear and terror are experienced by the reader, and it can show up just about anywhere, in science fiction, in mysteries, even in the mainstream.

2 What scares you?

I'm afraid of the neighborhood psychopath's first killing spree. I'm afraid that as much as I try to protect my son from pedophiles and drugs, there will always be someone waiting for him around some dark corner that I don't see coming. I'm afraid of people I love dying horrible deaths in which I can't do anything but watch them suffer.

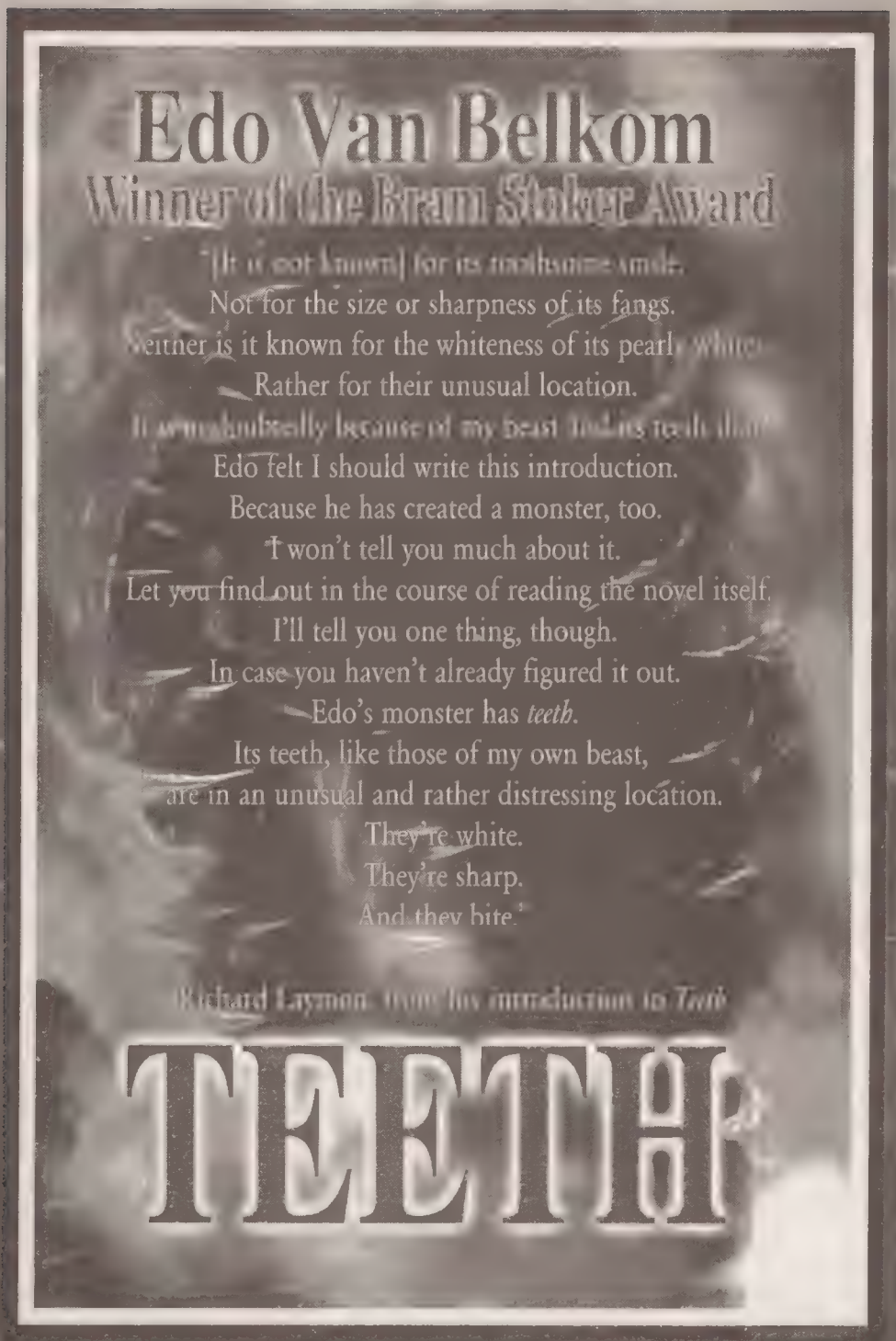
3 How do you translate your feelings of horror into terms that can evoke a response from the reader?

If something I write doesn't scare me, or at least doesn't give me a feeling of unease, then I can't expect it to have any sort of effect on the reader. I can't write something and hope it's going to scare the reader. I have to know it will. So, I'm basically writing for myself. If a story I write makes me feel uncomfortable, then I know it's going to work the same way when it gets into print.

4 Since evoking a response from yourself is a guidepost, is writing horror a draining or difficult experience?

I don't think writing horror is draining because when it works well there's a sort of elation that one feels. I've often written a particularly gritty or emotionally taxing scene and ended up by pumping my fist in the air as if I'd just scored some sort of victory. The difficulty comes in the struggle to get things just right. I'm not sure horror is a special case, or that this doesn't apply to other genres, but it's often difficult to make things work the way you want them too. If you're halfway there, then the effect won't be the same, and that's why it feels so good to know you've gotten it right.

"If something I write doesn't scare me, or at least doesn't give me a feeling of unease, then I can't expect it to have any sort of effect on the reader."


Edo Van Belkom
Winner of the Bram Stoker Award
[It is not known] for its toothsome smile.
Not for the size or sharpness of its fangs.
Neither is it known for the whiteness of its pearly whites.
Rather for their unusual location.
It is undoubtedly because of my beast and its teeth that
Edo felt I should write this introduction.
Because he has created a monster, too.
I won't tell you much about it.
Let you find out in the course of reading the novel itself.
I'll tell you one thing, though.
In case you haven't already figured it out.
Edo's monster has *teeth*.
Its teeth, like those of my own beast,
are in an unusual and rather distressing location.
They're white.
They're sharp.
And they bite.
Richard Laymon, from his introduction to *Teeth*
TEETH

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Is there a concern on your part, that after amassing such a body of work, that you might one day become cliched?

Sure, I sometimes worry that the well has run dry, or that I'm going to wind up repeating myself, but they are always short-lived fears. Since horror writers use their own lives as source material, one can never

run out of ideas. For example, the things that scared me in my mid-twenties don't scare me now and by the time I'm 60, there will be a whole new set of frights that will scare the crap out of me. And there are always other writers to expand the envelope and introduce me to new ways of doing things. Put it this way, I've never started a story with the words, 'It was a dark and stormy night,' and I don't think I ever will.

Some of your current work is as an editor of horror anthologies, what do you look for when you select pieces?

When I started editing anthologies, I wasn't quite sure how I was going to go about it. I had sold stories to plenty of anthologies, but I'd never been on the other end of the process, so I just ended up selecting stories that I liked. It really was as simple as that. If I didn't understand a story, or couldn't follow it, I didn't ask anyone to explain it to me, I just rejected it. In the end, I think I wound up selecting stories similar to the kinds of stories I write — ones with beginnings, middles and ends to them.

So far the process seems to have worked out well with BE AFRAID! the anthology I'm most proud of, selling well and ending up an Aurora and Stroker finalist.

What marks bad horror?

When I was editing the anthologies I saw a few examples of bad horror and in most cases it was simply due to bad writing. A lot of writers of horror come to it from their love of movies, or things that are not prose horror fiction. A lot of the stories I read had plenty of horrific occurances and situations in them but there was never an emotional context to make them work. You learn that by reading in the genre, finding out how things work and end up looking on the page.

There were also plenty of stories that might have had a horrific scene or idea to them, but they weren't framed by any sort of story. That's another thing you get from reading extensively in the field, story set up. If you read a 1,000 stories, chances are you'll find one framework that will make the story you want to write work. It's not as blatant as that, but if you've read enough in the field, all of this form and structure and emotion filters down into your own work.

After so many published works, how has your approach to the genre changed since Day One?

It hasn't changed all that much. I still write because I enjoy it. I'm beginning to do more novels now, but that's more a result of economics than anything else. Still, I love to write stories — my number one passion — and I'll still sit down and write a story for an anthology that I know I'll never make more than a few dollars selling to, but I do it for the sheer pleasure of it. If I couldn't do that from time to time, I'd be miserable.

Writing is, after all, an art form, and you can't just write for money because a lot of times the best art is produced without any thought or concession to commerce.

As for the actual writing, I find that when I began I knew where my stories were going at all times, but these days I find myself starting at the beginning and rambling along discovering what the story is about and how it will end. I'm not sure which way serves me best, but that's the way the stories are being written these days.

Complete this sentence: "If I wasn't writing horror, I would be writing ..."

Mysteries. Either that or advertising copy. The type of horror I write is very close to hardboiled mystery, so if I hadn't found acceptance in the horror genre, I probably would have slid into mysteries. There are an awful lot of differend kinds of mystery stories and I'm sure if I was well enough read in the field, I would have found one that suited my tastes. As for advertising copy, when the first newspaper I worked for closed down, I asked a friend who worked in advertising to see if he could introduce me to his boss and maybe see if there was a job opening somewhere for a writer. He never got around to doing that for me and I eventually wound up writing horror fiction.

Who do you read?

I have been making my way through a bunch of material that I have not been reading for pleasure. I was a judge for The Writers Guild of Alberta's Awards of Excellence, judging the Best First Book category; I read through a novel manuscript to provide feedback to a fellow author; I read through a second novel manuscript and provided comments as a favor to the editor at one of my publishers; and I was a judge for the Brampton (Ontario) Public Library's writing contest. When I'm not doing this type of reading, I love reading short stories and have read some great recent collections by Ed Gorman, Bill Pronzini, W.P. Kinsella, just to name a few. Novelists I like reading include Joe R. Lansdale, Ed Gorman, Richard Laymon, but that's only because I've already read everything by Robert Bloch, Richard Matheson and Ray Bradbury. I also read new writers in the horror field, because you have to keep up with who and what is hot, just to be aware of it, if nothing else. I recently finished Among the Missing, by the late Richard Laymon. It's a great horror novel that's also a very credible police procedural, very well done and very scary. It's full of so many twists and turns that I sometimes had a hard time keeping up with the plot, but like all of Dick's books, this one delivered plenty of shocks while being extremely entertaining.

Clute tries to 'seed' reader's minds

With Appleseed, John Clute offers readers a wealth of metaphorical references to contemporary life

John Clute has long been a fan of space operas.

And in his hands, the opera hits a number of stunning crescendos.

Clute, who is one of science fiction's best known critics and chroniclers of two genres for his encyclopedias of both science fiction and of fantasy, has recently published his first science fiction novel, Appleseed

In the novel, Nathaniel Freer is taking a cargo of nanoforges to Eolhixir. A data plague is infecting a number of solar systems. The plague is placing worlds into darkness and Freer's cargo is part of the solution to the dilemma.

Woven through the novel is the concept of communication. Clute disseminates the concept and examines its place in humanity. Naturally, such an exercise requires the proper format to effectively convey the ideas to the reader. That format, Clute decided, was one of the standards of the genre.

"I know I have a rather dense way of going about things," Clute explained. "I knew if I had a space opera story I would clarify what I was on about because it would force me to be clear in some ways about the nature of the world and it wasn't going to get choked in metaphors and in all sorts of complications that would not be very reader-friendly and partly because a space opera is the most original format that science fiction has evolved over the years."

The format also made it easier for Clute to tell his story effectively.

"I really liked that use. It was a way of not having to try to deal with the near impossibility of writing adequate science fiction about the near future on this planet which has already been transformed into a series of conflicting science fiction mission statements," Clute explained. "It was a much easier way to say interesting things about the nature of our species and the sort of things that we might get up to."

For his first science fiction novel, John Clute turned to one of the tried-and-true vehicles to serve up a thoughtful discourse on communication and the flow of information in society

Using a vehicle like a space opera does allow writers to keep pace with technology and "get some sense of the meaning of technology."

Despite the fact that space operas have become a tried-and-true vehicle for science fiction writers over the decades, Clute had no concerns that he would fall into any stereotypical traps. His confidence lay in the fact that his writing background

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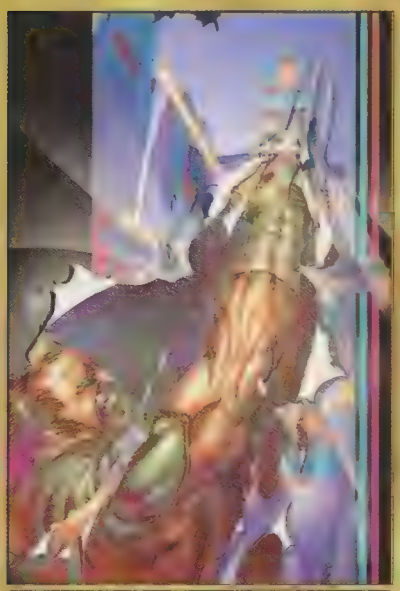

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The question (courtesy of Todd Dezago):
What mythical creature was the fat Merchant trying to bribe Serra to smuggle for him in Tellos 1? _____

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was not in science fiction.

"I knew I wouldn't end up in the place it was expected.," he said. "I always work by metaphorical leaps sideways and I knew that I would go sideways a lot from the start."

From a metaphorical standpoint, tiles and masks play an essential role in Appleseed.

"It's not going to be the way that it happens, but I think that its an attempt at prophetizing how it's going to feel for us in a century or so to be mortal locked in flesh communicating ritually and ceremoniously and, hopefully, politely and gently with the real world, the real minds, the world we have created around us."

The tiles are also a means for Clute to try and make sense of technology — "an attempt to understand living in a digital world ... the meaning rather than the details.

"It's both simple and complex at the same time," Clute explained.

Clute draws from the Portuguese art of azulejaria which involves tiles being placed pieced together to form a pictorial design which conveys a traditional story.

"So it fit the story nature of my book almost exactly, to have the tiles that line the walls of the ship illustrate all sort of stories out of human history.

"But the more complex or profound meaning of the tiles and or masks, because they sometimes slide one into another are the interface through which made minds, occupants of a higher digital world, relate to and communicate with the human world.

"Its very important on a very metaphorical level."

The tiles in Appleseed are operated by made minds who need to communicate with the lesser beings and, therefore, need to slow communications down to a point that humans can understand it.

"It's a modification of the communications into the world of human flesh."

Communication takes different forms throughout Appleseed.

"There's an enormous amount of communication between the characters," Clute notes.

This communication takes a variety of forms: Acoustic speech, which is set off by normal quotation marks in the novel; conclave speech which takes place in virtual reality and are set off by two hyphens at the beginning of each quote. These are communication which take place via tiles — an interface between the digital world, the quantum world and our world.

"It's not going to be the way that it happens, but I think that its an attempt at prophetizing how it's going to feel for us in a century or so to be mortal locked in flesh communicating ritually and ceremoniously and, hopefully, politely and gently with the real world, the real minds, the world we have created around us," Clute explains.

There is also the obvious metaphor of the title's reference to the American folkhero Johnny Appleseed ... in this case, the Klavier Station spreads seeds of life throughout the galaxy, and the ship's captain is known as Appleseed.

"It was a central part of the novel," Clute points out. "I wanted somebody who was shepherding something that was going to turn into a tree, which is something Klavier does.

While the idea of the tiles use in Appleseed was Clute's, he drew his inspiration from a 1999 visit to Portugal. There, he was a guest at a science fiction convention and purchased a book on tiles that was written by one of the convenors. The book, which Clute says is probably the only one on the subject, fed his interest on the subject.

The tiles can have a single picture on it and when placed with other titles form a larger mosaic. In most cases, the larger picture offers viewers a story.

"What we have with the use of tile is that, one, it's decorative because I like the idea of these tile patterns," Clute said.

The germ for Appleseed was formed back in 1994.

Then, Clute and some fellow writers had decided to write a series of space opera stories based on a game which he says "is almost immediately defunct."

The nature of the same was conveyed in the synopses we did, except for the names of a couple planets," he said.

The novelizations would add detail which were lacking in the world of the game. While Appleseeed is not Clute's novelization, his work of seven years ago served as "the grains of sand" which form the foundation of Appleseed.

Retro

As one of the renowned critics of the genre, Clute laments how popular culture has made writing good science fiction much more difficult.

"The task of a good science fiction ... always, but especially now ... has to avoid being retro. It's very easy to write Star Trek again, it's very easy because the big story of science fiction in the 20th century, the big exploratory,conquering, first world kind of story, those stories are kind of hypnotic and it's hard to avoid them," Clute explained. "A lot of science fiction writers still write stories in which basically white men with nuclear families do a lot of interesting things out in the galaxy."

Of course, part of the problem, Clute notes, is science fiction's maturity as a literary form.

"Science fiction is a very old genre, it's been around for 100 years and its very easy to repeat." ☆

NEXT ISSUE:

More really, really, good stuff

Kernaghan novel 'ices' Auroras

By
Gregg Chamberlain

The end of the 20th century and the start of the 21st proved very special for Eileen Kernaghan.

The Burnaby, B.C., author's latest novel, The Snow Queen, hit the bookstores in 2000. The following year it won the Aurora award for best work, long-form English.

After the ballots were counted, The Snow Queen beat out heavyweight entries like Robert J. Sawyer's Calculating God and James Alan Gardner's Hunted. Kernaghan herself even confessed surprise at how popular her latest writing effort proved.

"I was really tickled to be on the short list and I was not expecting to win," Kernaghan said after receiving her latest Aurora.

The Snow Queen, published by Thistledown Press, is a retelling of Hans Christian Andersen's classic fairy tale. There's a double satisfaction for Kernaghan in her latest work's success.

"I'd like to point out the fact that it is not from a Big American Publisher in New York but from a small literary press in Saskatoon which has been doing a series of young adult science fiction and fantasy novels.

"I take a lot of satisfaction in the fact that this is a small Canadian press, which has provided opportunities for a lot of Canadian writers. As far as the novel itself, I think it's the one that I'm most pleased with."

In her novel Kernaghan takes as her primary focus, not Gerda's quest to save her playmate, Kai, but her relationship with the Little Robber Maiden, one of the minor characters of the original fairy tale.

"It's simply because I'm so fond of that particular fairy tale. It's always been my favourite one because it has something that's very unusual in fairy tales ... it has a very strong, very independent feminist-female character in the Little Robber Maiden.

Photo by Gregg Chamberlain

Eileen Kernaghan's The Snow Queen toppled such perennial heavy weights as Robert J. Sawyer and James Alan Gardner to win this year's Aurora Award in the Best Long-Form English category.

"Actually, it originated with a poem that I wrote which was called The Robber Maiden's Story and then that expanded into a short story, which was also called The Robber Maiden's Tale which was in TransVersions, and then eventually I expanded that into a novel."

While it may sound easy enough, transforming her own original poem-slash-short story into a novel involved a great deal of research on Scandinavia during the Victorian Era and related topics like the Saami, the aboriginal folk of northern Finland.

"I tend to research as I need to know the material. I did a fair bit of reading about Denmark in about 1840, about the way people lived, the home furnishings, the style of dress, particularly because there's a fair bit of detail about what Gerda was wearing. And then certainly the Saami shamanism. I read books on the Lapps, on the Saami people, and on their shamans.

"Then I also read the Kalevala, the Finnish myth-cycle. It was interesting because as I was re-reading the fairy tale and also reading the Finnish myths, I began to see the resonances, the echoes in The Snow Queen story of the Woman of Pohjola, the Woman of the North, and I was sure that Hans Christian Andersen must have been aware of that, if only subconsciously, with it finding its way into the story. "So, I used that and then I went off into the Kalevala in the latter part of the book."

Adaptation

Kernaghan also celebrated another end-of-millennium event in seeing her Aurora-winning short story, Carpe Diem, adapted for the screen in 2000.

"It's probably my most published story." The cautionary tale's first appearance was in fall 1989.

Carpe Diem focuses on three women sharing a hospital room at a time when government-sanctioned euthanasia is a fact of life.

The three are all undergoing mandatory medical examinations as seniors who have passed the "age of retirement" which an over-populated society has deemed the time when old people must prove they have worth and won't be a burden on the public health service.

Whether or not any of them are destined for "reassignment" as involuntary organ donors depends on if they've done a good job of looking after their own health.

Calgary independent film maker Alan Belyea's Off the Couch

Continued on page 97

Ten Monkeys, Ten Minutes ... disturbing

My introduction to Peter Watts was from reading A Niche in the third Tesseracts anthology.

Science fiction with a marine setting is a rarity which is one reason why his story stood out.

The other was the unsettling feeling aroused by the description of two people manning a research station at the bottom of the ocean, both of them anatomically altered so they can survive the cold and pressure without the need for bulky diving gear, and the effect both the surgical changes and the environment have on one of researchers.

Ten Monkeys, Ten Minutes (Tesseract Books) opens with A Niche and closes with Home in which Watts returns to the marine environment with another examination of the same theme, carrying speculation about the effects of environment and technology to a logical conclusion.

All the other stories in the collection also have the environment as a common thread running through them. But be warned,these are not Earth First stories. As a matter of fact, Bulk Food is one story in this collection which is sure to upset some "green" people because it pokes wicked fun at the stereotyped thinking which they themselves have about the nature of nature itself.

An interesting collection. A disturbing collection.

— Gregg Chamberlain

Ten Monkeys Ten Minute $23.95 Cdn

Random House has done a new generation of science fiction readers a great favour through its release of Samuel R. Delany's **Dhalgren**.

Out of print since 1988 and increasing hard to come by even at used bookstores, Dhalgren presents the kind of head-spinning thought-provoking science fiction that is the genre at its full unbridled potential.

Tapping into his frustrations of watching inner cities in America implode as a result of the exodus of people to the suburbs — or to safer climes. The result was a gutting of its vibrant cultural atmosphere.

The novel takes place in the burnt-out husk of a city, Bellona. There, the remaining residents spend their days ... well, surviving. Into this danger zone comes The Kid.

A poet and adventurer, The Kid holds some of the keys to events that are bearing down on the city and the people who are remaining within its borders.

Written in 1974, the story of Dhalgren holds up some 30 years later — in fact, you can see the themes reverberate through countless science fiction novels that have come along during the ensuing years.

This is why critics and readers consider the novel a landmark.

Dhalgren is just the tip of the iceberg.

Random House, through its imprint, Vintage Books,will be reissuing other Delany classics Babel-17, Empire Star, Nova and Driftglass during the next year or so.

By tapping this fount from the past, the future never looked so bright.

— Chris Krejigaard

Dhalgren $27 Cdn/$18 US

One of the annual rites for science fiction fans is the release of L. Ron Hubbard's Writers of the Future tome.

This September's publication of **Writers of the Future XVII (Bridge)** gives readers reason to look past the warm summer months to the chill of fall.

Like its predecessors, the anthology presents some of the best new writers coming into the genre's professional ranks. And, like its predecessors, Volume XVII doesn't disappoint readers both in the variety of subjects among the works presented and in the variety of writing styles offered.

If you pick up the anthology (and you should), the short stories An Idiot Rode to Majra, The Plague and Ten Gallons a Whore are the first pieces you should head for.

While the entire book provides some fine reading — although I admit that God Loves the Infantry isn't among my faves — these three stories are the brightest gems that editors and contest judges have uncovered.

— Chris Krejigaard

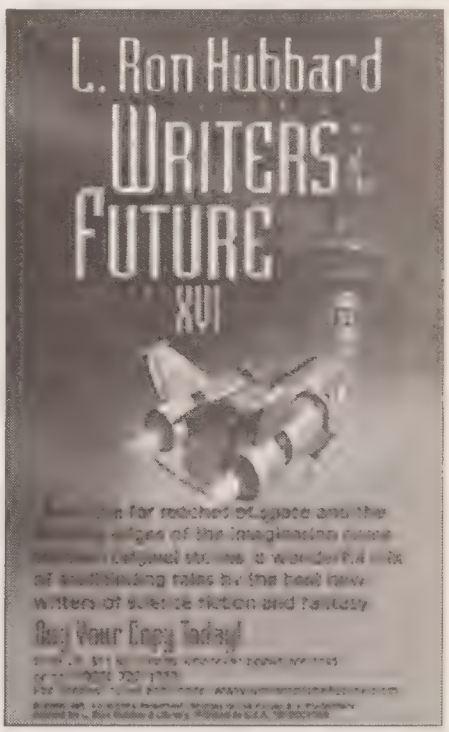
What I read: Robert Hewitt Wolfe

"I read a lot of Heinlein at an impressionable age. Heinlein should come with a warning label."

Also reads:
Larry Niven
Tolkien
Orson Scott Card
David Brin

I have always had trouble reading novels based on movie or television properties ... and there are alot of them around.

Part of this problem stems from the



fact that the material is so well-known that any slip up can be spotted and any deviation from what has already come to pass detracts from the story and my enjoyment of it.

I do, however, admire authors who can rise above the challenge and provide a strong addition to the mythos of whatever the subject they are dealing with — Star Trek, Star Wars, Babylon 5, etc.

With **T2: Infiltrator (HarperCollins)** S.M. Stirling has met the challenge and whupped it.

In Infiltrator, Stirling takes the remnants of the second movie and pushes the story forward. In the novel, the Cyberdyne Corporation is able to salvage enough cyborg material from the scene of the climactic battle that it is able to press on with cyborg development.

While Sarah and John hide from government agents, they find a partner in man sporting familiar features (you'll have to see for yourself) and have to battle another invasion from the future — this one aimed at ensuring Cyberdyne achieves its proper future.

— Lars Johansen

Infiltrator $37.95 Cdn/$25 US

Also recommended:

Appleseed, John Clute
Dance of Knives Donna McMahon
Krondor: Tears of God Raymond E. Fiest
Dune: House Harkonnen Herbert, Anderson

Upcoming Releases

The following are books are scheduled for release by U.S. publishers or their Canadian distributors during the next two months. Please note that release dates are subject to change. HC denotes hard cover, TP denotes trade paperback.

June

Aldiss, Brian	Supertoys Last All Summer Long	St. Martin's Griffin, TP
Anderson, Kevin J.	Dogged Persistence	Golden Gryphon Press, HC
Ashley, Mike, ed.	The Mammoth Book of Awesome Comic Fantasy	Carroll & Graf TP
Baxter, Stephen	Mammoth, Book Two: Longtusk	HarperCollins/Eos TP
Bradley, Rebecca	Lady Pain	Ace
Carey, Jacqueline	Kushiel's Dart	Tor/HB Fenn, HC
Czerneda, Julie	In the Company of Others	DAW
Drake, Emily	The Magickers	DAW, HC
Duane, Diane	The Wizard's Dilemma	Harcourt Children's, HC
Foster, Alan Dean	Reunion	Ballantine Del Rey, HC
Frazetta, Frank	Testament: Life & Art of Frank Frazetta	Underwood Books, HC
Gaiman, Neil	American Gods	HarperCollins/Morrow, HC
Harlan, Thomas	The Storm of Heaven	Tor/HB Fenn, HC
Harrison, Harry	50 in 50	Tor/HB Fenn, HC
Hartwell, David G., ed.	Year's Best SF 6	HarperCollins/Eos
Martin, George R.R., Lisa Tuttle	Windhaven	Bantam Spectra, HC
McArthur, Maxine	Time Future	Warner Aspect
McAuley, Paul J.	The Secret of Life	Tor/HB Fenn, HC
Moorcock, Michael	King of the City	HarperCollins/Morrow, HC
Pierce, Tamora	Protector of the Small: Squire	Random House, HC
Pohl, Frederik	Platinum Pohl	Tor/HB Fenn, HC
Pohl, Frederik, ed.	The SFWA Grand Masters, Vol. 3	Tor/HB Fenn, HC
Reynolds, Alastair	Revelation Space	Ace, HC
Silverberg, Robert	The King of Dreams	HarperCollins/Eos, HC
Tarr, Judith	Daughter of Lir	Tor/HB Fenn, HC
White, James	Beginning Operations	Orb, TP
Williamson, Jack	Terraforming Earth	Tor/HB Fenn, HC

July

Bloch, Robert	The Lost Bloch, Volume 3:	Subterranean Press, HC
Bradley, M.Z., Deborah J. Ross	The Fall of Neskaya	DAW HC
Brust, Steven	Issola	Tor/HB Fenn, HC
Cadigan, Pat	Dervish is Digital	Tor/HB Fenn, HC
Cherryh, C.J.	Hammerfall	HarperCollins/Eos, HC
Douglas, L. Warren	The Veil of Years	Baen, HC
Dozois, Gardner, ed.	The Year's Best Science Fiction: 18	St. Martin's Griffin, TP
Foy, George	The Last Harbor	Bantam Spectra, TP
Gemmell, David	Ravenheart	Ballantine Del Rey, HC
Hartwell, D.G., K. Cramer, eds.	Year's Best Fantasy	HarperCollins/Eos
Irvine, Ian	A Shadow on the Glass	Warner Aspect
Keyes, J. Gregory	The Shadows of God	Ballantine Del Rey, TP
Kiernan, Caitlín R.	From Weird and Distant Shores	Subterranean Press, HC
Klasky, Mindy L.	The Glasswrights' Progress	Penguin/Roc
Kress, Nancy	Probability Sun	Tor/HB Fenn, HC
Lickiss, Rebecca	Eccentric Circles	Ace
Lupoff, Richard A.	The Great American Paperback	Collectors Press, HC
Mann, George	Mammoth Encyclopedia of Science Fiction	Carroll & Graf, TP
Nielsen Hayden, Patrick, ed.	Starlight 3	Tor/HB Fenn, HC
VanderMeer, Jeff	City of Saints and Madmen	Imaginary Worlds Press, HC

Best Sellers

The top-selling novels at White Dwarf Books in Vancouver, B.C.

Hardcovers

1) One Kingdom, Sean Russell
2) Changer of Worlds, David Weber
3) Flag in Exile, David Weber
4) Serpent's Shadow, Mercedes Lackey
5) Krondor: Tears of Gods, Raymond E. Fiest
6) Against the Odds, Elizabeth Moon
7) Storm of Swords, George R.R. Martin
8) Deepsix, Jack McDevett
9) Collected Stories, Arthur C. Clarke
10) Octagonal Raven, L.E. Modesitt Jr.

Paperbacks

1) Lord of Emperors, Guy Gavriel Kay
2) Fools errant, Matt Hughes
3) Ashes of Victory, David Weber
4) License Invoked, Asprine&Nye
5) Infinity Beach, Jack McDevett
6) Pegasus in Space, Anne McCaffrey
7) Second Summoning, Tanya Huff
8) Stone Canal, Ken MacLeod
9) Martian Race Gregory Benford
10) By Any Other Name, Spider Robinson

European imports harken to old days

Puritanical Euphoric Misanthropia is enough to convert anyone to old-style speed metal

By Kennedy Gordon

Dear Mom:

Things are going really well here in Germany. No, I haven't found a job yet, but I managed to find a nice place to sleep in the basement of an abandoned glue factory in Donzdorf.

I only have to share it with 14 other guys, which is OK. Yes, it gets a little damp at night, and the howls of the crackheads make it hard to sleep. But I still have my music.

I've been listening to my new favourite band, Dimmu Borgir. No, I don't know what their name means.But it's scary, isn't it? You ought to see these guys: six scowling, evil, black-clad doom mongers. On their new CD jacket, they pose under a pentagram! That's cool!

The music is old-style teutonic speed-metal. It's so fast the drumbeats blend together into a heart-attack-velocity tantrum and the guitar chords sound like they've been chopped up with rusty razors. And the singer sounds like he sat on a lobster.

The songs have cool metal titles like Hybrid Stigmata and Blessings Upon The Throne of Tyranny. I like that one the best, even if it goes so fast I can't actually hear anything.

If I weren't such a death-metal-loving dork, Mom, I would think this band was really, really crappy. But since I turned to the dark, fast side of metal, I think Dimmu Borgir is the future, not the past, of this long-dead genre.

Long-dead is a compliment, by the way.

Love, BloodStar (formerly your son Billy).

P.S. Send money. I've been scrounging enough food, but my roots are showing and I need more black dye.

Artist: Dimmu Borgir
CD: Puritanical Euphoric Misanthropia
Label: Nuclear Blast Records
Genre: Teutonic Speed-Metal
Perfect For: Drawing pentagrams in old Lovecraft anthologies

Acucrack, whose name sounds like it's describing the plumber with the best-fitting jeans, has managed to live up to one of the oldest cliché words used to describe, techno, or electronic music: soundscape.

For years, critics have described everyone from Portishead to Apollo 440 as making „soundscapes,‰ or „sonic tapestries.‰ It's supposed to describe music that is symphonic and cinematic while at the same time pulsing with throbbing beats and electro bleeps and bloops.

Acucrack's disc is, for want of a better cliché, a masterful sonic tapestry, a soundscape that summons up instant images of ancient technologies rising forth, of Atlantean mysteries and long-forgotten machines.

Modern, yet firmly rooted in the esoteric, Sorted doesn't drive its message home like some of the harder-hitting electronic acts out there.

The brain trust behind this disc seems to prefer to brood over the beats, to craft gentler, more eloquent loops and fills.

Which is fine.

Don't expect to dance, and don't expect your friends to start "getting" techno when they hear this one.

This is different. This is exceptional. This is the kind of disc to listen to on headphones while you drift off into some other world.

Artist: DJ? Acucrack
CD: Sorted
Label: E-Magine Entertainment
Genre: Electronic
Perfect For: The soundtrack for the fantasy movie your cousin wants to make

Didn't know they had vampires in Norway.

But they do, apparently. One, at least. Her name is Anja Natasha, she's a beautiful alabaster woman with bloody lips, and she fronts the Norwegian gothic black metal band Dismal Euphony.

Consider this lyric: "The horror set in me, twisted minds like roaring thunder/Come with me, catastrophe, lead me to reality."

She also sings the lovely line "Blood is my obsession."

So you can pretty much figure out what this is all about.

This kind of music, when done properly, can be haunting and romantic and sinister all at once. Consider the Montreal gloom-tech band Howling Syn, which does what Dismal Euphony might have been attempting (although in a somewhat different genre).

Where bands like Howling Syn can be sad and vampiric, while still sounding gorgeous and lush, groups like Dismal Euphony sometimes dwell a little too long on the black-souled lyrics and not enough on the music.

Context, of course, matters – Scandinavia is home to a

Continued on page 97

Horror sites abound on the web

Want some horror art? Well, if you know the key words, there's plent to find

By
Dale L. Sproule

Many of the more ambitious writers I know will admit to having done a "vanity search" at one time or another.

This generally begins with entering your own name in the subject line of any major search engine. Not only can you find out if your latest opus is making any kind of impact on the world at large, you can also track down illegal reprints and connect with people who like your work.

The downside is finding out you virtually don't exist.

So anyway, it was in that spirit, while looking for online validation that I was gaining some kind of reputation as a significant artist of the bizarre — that I unearthed:

The Sticky Path Through The Art Museum Of Horrors

OK websurfers, limber up your keyboard fingers and tap your way to your favourite search engine. For me that's www.dogpile.com. Enter "DLSproule" (I TOLD you it was a vanity search :-]) ... no, seriously, if you're doing a vanity search you should enter your OWN name! OK, enough of that fooling around.

If you want to be a part of this mission, key in "Horror Art" and see what comes up.

First search engine up is GoTo.

Grotesque in Art takes you to a Cal Tech site divided into eight sub-pages titled "Death," "Torture," etc. Each page contains three to five great works of art on the theme.

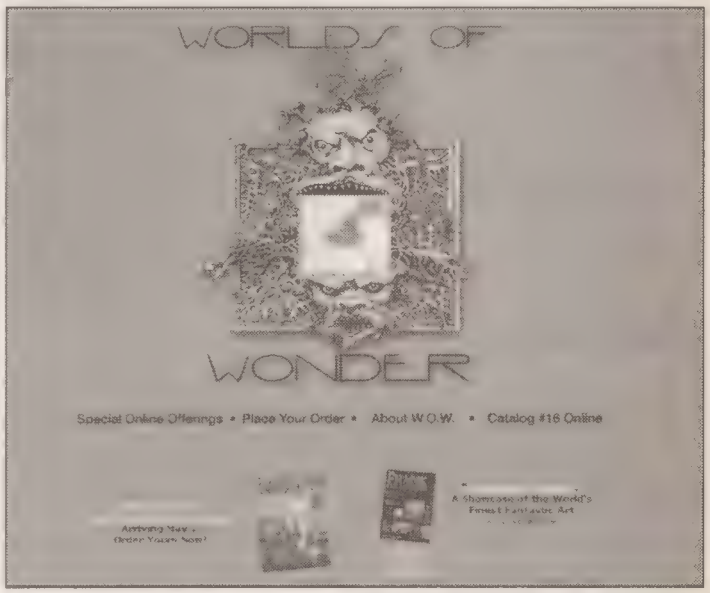
For instance, you'll find Edvard Munsch's "Scream" in the gallery devoted to "Madness." A classy but conservative site.

Horrorartonline touts itself as "the best horror site on the web." "You want horror art? You NEED horror art? Get it here!"

I checked out the first three artists on their top five and they're all decent artists — but I've seen scarier images watching Care Bears when my daughter was a toddler. That's not horror art!

Some of these artist collective search engines can lead to interesting artists. Through a British site called Darkstone (**www.elfstone.co.uk/darkstone.htm**) I picked out the work of Noel Beebe, an exciting discovery for any lovers of dark art who aren't already aware of his work.

At worst, it's a successful melange of styles from Geiger to Vargas. At best, it's intricate and visionary. But be careful, I was just surfing innocently along when the next thing you know was at **http://www.gothchix.com/mistressagony.html** and wondering how I got there!



Worlds of Wonder is one of the places to find top-notch speculative art.

Several engines have top five links to The Art of Jack Keefer.

He turns out to be a pretty good artist with a comic bookish style — some nice 3D fantasy figures with a Frazetta feel.

If you prefer your art a little stranger, I recommend going to **www.slowart.com.**

All the Limner Gallery artists are good, but if you're looking for true horror art, you'll find the work of Tim Slowinsky and Jeramy Turner particularly eerie and grotesque.

Also highly recommended is Gakart.

Gak is a highly idiosyncratic and talented artist from San Francisco. His URL is **www.feoamante.com/Gak/**

Now let's see which Canadian artists we can track down.

Due to the lack of Canadian horror art specialists, we'll look at a range of speculative artists.

A veritable who's who of Canadian SF artists is viewable (in the form of On Spec Covers) on the conspec website **http://www.compusmart.ab.ca/clear/conspec/sponsors.htm.**

I'll track down a couple of those artists.

Enter "Jean-Pierre Normand" in the Alta Vista search engine and link number one will take you to the homepage of the man who is probably Canada's premier sf illustrator (**http://archetypal.com/gallery/jean_pierre_normand/index.htm**. Ten of his excellent liquid acrylic works are viewable on a site that is simple, clean and easy to navigate. And Made in Canada hosts a nice mini-

gallery of his work.

Several search engines (not to mention the SFWA artists page) direct you to **www.flux.com/pasternak/** but the site doesn't seem to be functioning, which is a pity, because Robert Pasternak is one of my favourite artists and it would be nice to see more of his work online.

Enter Tim Hammell in Lycos, and you'll be presented with a choice of three pages in Tim's web gallery. All are worth the trip, but the images are large and the pages load slowly on low-speed connections.

http://members.home.net/jimbeveridge/ will take you to the website of James Beveridge — best known for his crisp, fluid images in On Spec. His site offers a wide variety of thumbnails from which you can view individual works.

Less well known in SF circles is the strange art of Vince Marcone. His website at **www.mypetskeleton.com** comes in a choice of formats for high and low speed connections.

Either direction you go will take you on a surreal and very worthwhile ride.

Martin Springett is harder to find on the web. **www.brightweavings.com** is the Guy Gavriel Kay website , which has some of Martin's art for the Fionovar Tapestry on display. And you'll find his book cover for a children's book called The Follower.

To end off the column this time around, I figured I would lead you to some of the best sites for some of the most popular artists working in the sf, fantasy, horror fields.

Let's start with Fantasia Online.

It's straightforward to get to. Just type **www.fantasiaonline.com/** — and you'll soon be perusing some gorgeous artwork by acknowledged masters including Jim Burns, Don Maitz and JK Potter.

Worlds of Wonder at **www.wow-art.com** has hundreds of works on sale from over 40 artists including Jill Bauman, Ian Miller and Bob Eggleton. Michael Whelan is a force unto himself, with **michaelwhelan.com, thedark-one.com** and **glassonion.com** all dedicated to his work.

You'll find work by almost any artist you like online, but it's also worth exploring for artists you've never heard of.

I've always been surprised by how many online magazines fail to take advantage of the fact that they can present breathtaking, full-colour, original art! They still don't, for the most part, but if you, like me, would like to see the web at its visual best, then start surfing through art sites.

Dale Sproule is a Toronto writer, artists, editor and web-meister. He founded and edited the first 11 issues of TransVersions with his wife Sally McBride. His Aurora-nominations include two for fiction and five for editing. He is currently writing screenplays and designing websites, including his current online graphic novel project, Razorwings.

Kernaghan

from page 92

Productions adapted Carpe Diem as a 10-minute short film which should be making the rounds of film festivals, art shows, and sf conventions.

"A very nice man to work with," Kernaghan said. "He did the film script himself and was very faithful to the story. I think what may have attracted him was it was an indictment of the way our medical/health system seems headed."

Kernaghan is now several chapters into her latest project, The Alchemist's Daughter, set in Elizabethan England at a time when Shakespeare is just starting out as a playwright and the threat of the Spanish Armada is a year away from reality.

"It concerns Renaissance magic and alchemy and conspiracies against Queen Elizabeth. Everything that was happening then with the political machinations of Elizabethan England."

While Kernaghan describes The Alchemist's Daughter as a young adult novel, she believes it will hold as much appeal to older readers as did its award-winning sister book, The Snow Queen.

☆

Music

from page 95

dark metal scene the likes of which North American have never really known. Perhaps, over there, groups like D.E. have an audience.

On this side of the cold Atlantic, though, free of the scene-making buzz that helps mediocre acts achieve stardom, all that can be said about Python Zero is thanks, but we have enough grim evil to last us a lifetime.

Artist: Dismal Euphony
CD: Python Zero
Label: Nuclear Blast
Genre: Heavy Metal
Perfect for: Painting your toenails black again and again and again

Belaboring the Obvious: a review

This compact disc is a must-buy for those of us who've been tantalized by Spider Robinson's Beatles jam sessions at conventions, wondered what his original stuff sounds like and who have wished some of the reading of his works were on tape.

Belaboring the Obvious (available on-line at **www.spiderrobinson.com**) goes a long way toward starting to assuage the want.

The CD includes four original songs covering pretty much all of Robinson's views of the world — from the romantic (Belaboring the Obvious) to the comic (The Drunkard's Song), from the gently mocking (Leather Zippo Holster) to the seriously philosophic/philosophically serious (Oblivion), in a lovely range of blues from lowdown to barrelhouse.

Separating the songs is a three-part reading of the first chapter of Callahan's Key.

Believe it when I say that if you've never had the pleasure of hearing Robinson reading one of his own works, then I both pity and envy you as you are in for one helluva treat.

Gregg Chamberlain

from page 82

changes in season two (which started production in March) in terms of design of the ship and cgi use. The producers also plan to tinker with some of the more mundane aspects such as nailing down the relative size of the ship in order to make the interior action more in tune to the exterior of the ship.

"It's general evolutionary things for the season," Eastman points out.

"The changes will also enhance (co-executive producer and head writer) Robert Hewitt Wolfe's idea that the ship has a consciousness," Eastman explained "and to find some ways for it to have more personality. The magic technology of Andromeda needs to evolve along with the characters."

While Andromeda affords opportunities for the producers and writers, it also carries the daunting challenge of having the Roddenberry name as part of its title.

The tag, Eastman said, means that viewers come to the series with heightened expectations.

"Gene is a giant in science fiction in terms of broadening the appeal of science fiction to a great mass audience," Eastman explained. "Gene also stood for a lot of values that are important to people and we have a responsibility to do a quality of work and a level of content that is responsible to the Roddenberry legacy."

But simply following the directions Roddenberry left in a desk drawer so many years ago isn't enough for Eastman, Wolfe and the rest of the creative force behind the series.

"We want to break new ground. We've tried to be very honest to both the legacy of science fiction and where it can go. But we don't want to be caught in a situation where it becomes a formula," Eastman explained. "The first words spoken on the show are battle stations. We want Andromeda to be a swashbuckling adventure, a show where something exciting and unexpected is going to happen all the time.

"We're going to keep going to new adventures that no one is going to expect." ☆

Big Trouble in Little China... big treat for Carpenter fans

Big Trouble in Little China (Fox), 1986, 99 minutes, Kurt Russell, Kim Cattrall.

When you think of John Carpenter and Kurt Russell, it's easy to be restricted to Snake Pliskin and the two Escape From ... movies or to the horror films which form the bulk of Carpenter's film library.

But to do that means you run the risk of overlooking a Carpenter gem (one that has never gotten its due).

In Big Trouble, Russell plays a wise-cracking truck driver who helps his friend pick up his fiancee at the airport and ends up in Chinatown fighting supernatural forces at the command of a 2,000-year-old magician, Lo Pan.

The story isn't played as a straight sci-fi/fantasy piece. Russel, Catrell and company play it with plenty of humour.

With Big Trouble, Carpenter showed he could do action as well as horror and science fiction — and Russell showed flashes of the comedic talent that he mined in later movies like Overboard.

With its DVD release, Fox has made it easy to appreciate the nuances (of which there are few) as well as the bombastic (of which there are many). The wide-screen treatment gives a nice feel to the movie — although putting the movie on a small screen doesn't quite do it justice ... especially when it comes to the fight scenes.

DVD features: anamorphic widescreen, bilingual (English/French), commentary track by John Carpenter, Kurt Russell, featurettes, still, articles, music video and trailers.

X-Files Season 3 Collector's Edition (Fox), 2001, David Duchovny, Gillian Anderson.

Fox has also done X-Files fans a lot of good by compiling the entire third season under one roof.

There are some who believe the series began hitting its stride during season three. Certainly it was when the mainstream media began flogging the series.

This three-disc set offers up such gems as Jose Chung's 'From Outer Space'.

Sell the videos and get the DVD collection.

DVD features: documentary, Chris Carter interview, deleted scenes, 46 television promos, commetary by Kim Manners and Carter, DVD-Rom game.

Also out there on DVD:

The Fall of the House of Usher: (1960, MGM) Vincent Price, Mark Damon. The best of the Roger Corman adaptations.

Faust: (1926, Kino) Gosta Ekmann. The silent masterpiece is remastered into a, well, a masterpiece.

The Mummy Ultimate Edition: (1999, Universal) Brendan Fraser, Pisses us off that we bought the "Collector's Edition."

Shadow of the Vampire: (2000, Universal), Willem Dafoe. Watch back-to-back with Nosferatu (Morningside, 1995) and get a real appreciation for the more-recent film.

SPACE: THE IMAGINATION STATION'S

Summer schedule

Eastern Time	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY	Pacific Time
6:00am	Highlander					Space News	Canadian	3:00am
6:30am.						Twilight Zone	Document.	3:30am
7:00am.	Quantum Leap					Earth	G. Hornet	4:00 am
7:30am						Final Conflict	Elec. Play.	4:30am.
8:00am	Beast	American	Crow	Raven	Seven	movie	Capt. Power	5:00am
8:30am	Master	Gothic			Days		Odyssey	5:30am
9:00am	Gene Roddenberry's						Battlestar	6:00am
9:30am	Earth: Final Conflict						Galactica	6:30am
10:00am	Star Trek							7:00am
10:30am								7:30am
11:00am	Highlanders					Star Trek:		8:00am
11:30am						Next Generation		8:30am
Noon	Star Trek: Next Generation					Star Trek:	The Lost	9:00am
12:30pm						Deep Space 9	World.	9:30am
1:00pm	Quantum Leap					Star Trek:	Relic	10:00am
1:30pm						Voyager	Hunter	10:30am
2:00pm	Gene Roddenberry's					Movie	Movie	11:00am
2:30pm	Earth: Final Conflict							11:30am
3:00pm	Xena							noon
3:30pm								12:30pm
4:00pm	Star Trek					The	Space	1:00pm
4:30pm						Immortal	Specials	1:30pm
5:00pm	Star Trek: Deep Space 9					Roswell	Sheena	2:00pm
5:30pm								2:30am
6:00pm	Highlander					Battlestar		3:00pm
6:30pm						Galactica	Beastmaster	3:30pm
7:00pm	Babylon 5					The Lost	Earth	4:00pm
7:30pm						World	Final Conflict	4:30pm
8:00pm	Sheena	Sliders	Sliders	Sliders	Sliders	Relic		5:00pm
8:30pm						Hunter	Movie	5:30pm
9:00pm	Seven	The	First	Angel	Roswell.	Movie		6:00pm
9:30pm	Days	Immortal	Wave					6:30pm
10:00pm	Star Trek: Voyager						movie	7:00pm
10:30pm								7:30pm
11:00pm	X-Files					Space		8:00pm
11:30pm						Bar		8:30pm
midnight					Space	Movie	Lexx.	9:00pm
12:30am					Bar			9:30pm
1:00am	Movie	Movie	Movie	Movie	Movie	Harsh		10:00pm
1:30am						Realm	Space	10:30pm
2:00am	X-Files					Lexx	Specials	11:00pm
2:30am								11:30pm
3:00am	Babylon 5					Good		midnight
3:30am						VS		12:30am
4:00am	Star Trek: Voyager					Evil		1:00am
4:30am								1:30am
5:00am	Deep Space Nine					American	Paranormal	2:00am
5:30am						Gothic	prog	2:30am

Highlights

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Trebor

from page 32

because you were in the same room as the actor," he explained. "As opposed to me being off in New Zealand or in Vancouver and I come into your living room."

With Hercules now into reruns, Trebor is looking to return the theatre.

He has written a one-man theatre piece, an update of Diary of a Madman, and is trying to get it on stage so that he can "exercise those muscles again."

In the piece, Trebor plays an out-of-work Russian actor who finds himself unemployed thanks to the bum economy and the Mafia. So he sells rotten fruit, bad liquor and performs in bad infomercials on pickling herring to make ends meet. It's a process which slowly drives him mad.

"It's comedic, poignant and disturbing hopefully."

The play, which allows Trebor to draw on his own frustrations as a middle-aged character actor, also allows him to ad lib and engage the audience as part of the piece.

The quest for that immediate feedback has also led Trebor to take on a formidable number of convention appearances during the coming months so that he can enjoy an interplay with the fans.

"I'd like people to say, 'When we watch Bob Trebor, we know we're in good hands, we know we're going to get something special, we're not going to be bored, we're not going to get the expected'," he explained.

"I'd like to be known as the guy who delivers the goods in an interesting, always entertaining way.

"I want to be known as the guy who always bring something special to the party."

After almost three decades in the business, Trebor can look back on a sizeable and diverse range of characters and projects. Still, Trebor will continue to be identified with Salmoneus - and he doesn't mind a bit.

"Just like those characters from Star Trek, Salmoneus will never really leave me," Trebor said. "Salmoneous was a great loving, terrific character."

☆

Astonishing

from page 69

and by independent comic fans who "tend to freak out at the sight of anything in tights."

"I learned from that. I learned that if I was going to do black and white, I was going to have to do something that would appeal to both groups."

The end result dumped the costumes — except for a logo on the hero's chest.

Also playing into the decision was Conley's love of old-time science fiction. But everytime he took a serious approach to the story, he failed.

"Everytime, I just wanted to draw monkeys and robots and flying saucers," he said. "I wanted to draw something that no question would be totally goofy."

The latter aspect was in response to the flood of science fiction movies that took themselves too seriously and were too heavy for audiences.

Should sales of the Galaxy book reach expectations and Image opts for a square-bound format, the book could make it into bookstores and reach what Conley calls "My kind of audience.

"My stories tend to be to a very general audience, but there is a lot of geeky comics minutia," he said. "I like to throw them in, but not at the expense of the movies."

☆

Dubin

from page 44

woman go to town on television and be a real pig?" Dubin said of Gigerotta. "Usually with women parts you have to have some manners. Not here."

As the cast was selected and work on the first movie commenced, the chaotic, panic-inducing nature of the script was lost.

"It worked its way through when we were on our feet doing it," Dubin recalls.

"It's one thing to read something, but it's another to get the cast together and you see the chemistry and you see the different personalities meld together, it makes a huge difference.

"Especially, when the material is so off the wall. When it came together, it was mind-blowing."

Dubin was incredulous at the excesses that marked the series' early days ... and which formed the foundation of the "more-is-better" philosophy that producers and writers have built upon during the course of the past few years.

Even with both her characters just memories, Dubin is set to return to Lexx during its fourth season (which is scheduled to begin airing in July).

She's scheduled to take on a role which she describes "a Giggerota-slash-Queen-slash-blank.

"The character is so politically incorrect and no woman has ever played it in science fiction history."

Beyond that, Dubin says, fans will have to wait until the season airs.

MAY 25-27

Close Quarters Standby 4 (CQS4) — the Official La Femme Nikita Fan Convention: Sheraton Parkway North Hotel,Toronto. Scheduled guests Include: Alberta Watson, Don Francks, Matthew Ferguson, Carlo Rota, Malcolm Xerxes, Josh Holliday, Doug MacRae, Jim Murrin, Geoff Murrin and Blaine Johnson. Registration: $95 U.S. by April 21. Information: www.oversight.org, oversight_1@hotmail.com or telephone (904) 908-5446.

MAY 25-27

Anime North: Toronto Airport Marriott, Dixon Road, Toronto. Scheduled Guests: Ben Dunn, Stephen R. Bennett IV, Doug Smith. Registration: $30 Cdn/ $22 US until April 9; $40/$30 at the door. Information: info@animenorth.com or www.animenorth.com

JULY 21-22

Ai-Kon: University of Manitoba, Winnipeg, MB. Featuring movie and series screenings and other events. Registration: Members $2.50 for one day or $5 for both days; non-members — $7 for one day or $10 for both days. Information: umanime@yahoo.com or at www.ai-kon.home.dhs.org

JULY 20-22

Toronto Trek 15: Regal Constellation Hotel, Dixon Road, Toronto. Scheduled guests: Armin Shimerman, Robert Trebor, Andreas Katsulas. Registration: (until June 1) Weekend passes: $40 Cdn/$30 US; Friday: $20/$15; Saturday: $35/$26; Sunday: $25/$20. Also: **WaveCon 2001:** Free with admission to Toronto Trek. Information: www.tcon.icomm.ca, http://wavecon.firstwavehq.net/ or wavecon@firstwavehq.net tcon@icomm.ca; (416) 410-8266.

AUGUST 3-5

Conversion XVIII: Metropolitan Centre, Calgary, Alta. Scheduled guests: David Drake, Jean-Pierre Normand. Information: P.O.Box 43006, DVPO, Calgary, T2J 7A7, fax (403)569-1516 or www.conversion.ab.ca

AUGUST 4-6

Victoria Comic Book, Sci-Fi and Fantasy Convention:Victoria Conference Centre, Victoria, B.C. Registration: NA. Information: www.victoria-comicon.com or tpurdy@tourvic.com

AUGUST 30 - SEPTEMBER 3

Millennium Philcon: Pennsylvania Convention Centre and Philadelphia Marriott Hotel. Scheduled guests: Greg Bear, Gardner Dozois, Stephen Youll. Registration: $145 new attending;$90 convert. Information: www,phil2001.org, www.netaxs.com/~phil2001.

OCTOBER 5-7

Praxis 2001: A Space Odyssey, 2001: Radisson Hotel Greentree, Pittsburgh, Pa. Scheduled guests: Nigel Bennett,Marc Okrand, Paula Crist. Registration: basic weekend: $45 US, daily $25 US. Information: Praxis P.O. Box 18076 Pittsburgh, Pa 15236-0076 www.praxisfoundation.org

OCTOBER 12-14

Anime USA 2001: Holiday Inn® Rosslyn, Westpark Hotel at Key Bridge,1900 North Fort Myer Dr., Arlington, Virginia 22209. Scheduled guests: TBA. Registration: Postmarked by June 23 $30, Postmarked by Sept 21, $35. Information: www.animeusa.org.

OCTOBER 26 — 28

Chiller Theatre Toy, Model & Film Expo: Sheraton Meadowlands, E. Rutherford, N.J. Scheduled guests: TBA. Registration: Advanced tickets $10 US per day, or $25 US for all three days (VIP). At the door: $15 US per day. Information: www.chillertheatre.com

ONGOING

Utarpa: Toronto's longest running anime club. www.utarpa.org Quarterly membership: $5

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AUGUST 29-SEPTEMBER 2

60th World SF Con: San Jose Convention Centre, San Jose, Ca. Scheduled guests: Vernor Vinge, David Cherry, Bjo & John Trimble. Registration: Attending after July 15 $180 Cdn, Supporting membership $55 Cdn. Information :333 Lipton St., Winnipeg, MB, R3C 2H2

Parsec is not responsibile for changes in hotels, guests, prices, dates or cancellations. It is the sole responsibility of convention organizers to provide this information.

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Our Sources

These are the people we turn to for information about comic books in Canada. If you have a question or are looking for a hard-to-find back issue, give them a call.

NOVA SCOTIA
Kevin Sauder
Mirror Universe Cards, Comics & Games
79 Alderney Dr.
Dartmouth, B2Y 2N7
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Strange Adventures Comic Books
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Fredericton, E3B 1B2
(506) 450-3759

Dino
Halley's Comics
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Saint John, E2L 2H3
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www.thecomichunter.com

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Newmarket, L8Y 8C9
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2374 Yonge St.
391 Bank St.
Toronto
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MANITOBA
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Will Sylvester
Comic Cave
1104 Corydon Ave
Winnipeg,
(204) 284-2210

SASKATCHEWAN
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1010 8th Street East
Saskatoon, S7H 0R9
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Gerry Macdonald
Phoenix Comics &Books
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(780) 430-0598

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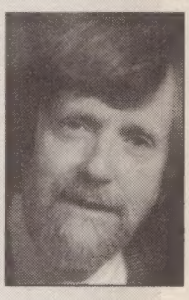
(604) 682-3019

Steve
Up-Start Comics & Games
1483 A Bowen Rd.
Nanaimo, V9S 1G4
(250) 741-0101

Who's Who

Robert J. Sawyer has been called "the dean of Canadian science fiction" by The Ottawa Citizen and "just about the best science-fiction writer out there these days" by The Denver Rocky Mountain News.

Joanne Mutch is a freelance science fiction, fantasy artist who works out of her home creating commission pieces for customers over the Internet. She is currently working on a fantasy novel, a T-shirt line for women and a Lady Death costume that would make anyone want to go to Hell. She currently resides in Barrie, Ont., with her husband Matt and her three crazy cats. If you have any comments about her work, good or bad, drop her a line at: rummblestrips@home.com



Frederick D Brown is a Toronto writer and college physics professor with nine published short stories: Hoax, Good Question Nightmare Beneath The Ice, Penance, Russet House, Noah's Arc, Mists of the Mind, Chimes and Thunder in the Forest. A 10th story, Pale Visitor, is to be published soon in Storyteller magazine. He has also co-authored four science textbooks and has developed educational materials for the Algonquin Space Campus and the Canadian Space Agency. In his spare time he enjoys reading mystery and fantasy novels, playing the piano and stargazing.

Derwin Mak is a Toronto-based fantasy and science fiction writer. He is a frequent contributor to Parsec.

Gregg Chamberlain is a journalist based in Revelstock, B.C. Gregg serves as Parsec's chief West Coast correspondent.

A. Jaye Williams serves as Parsec's main correspondent in Eastern Canada. Look for his coming interview with the former Man of Steel, Dean Cain.

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